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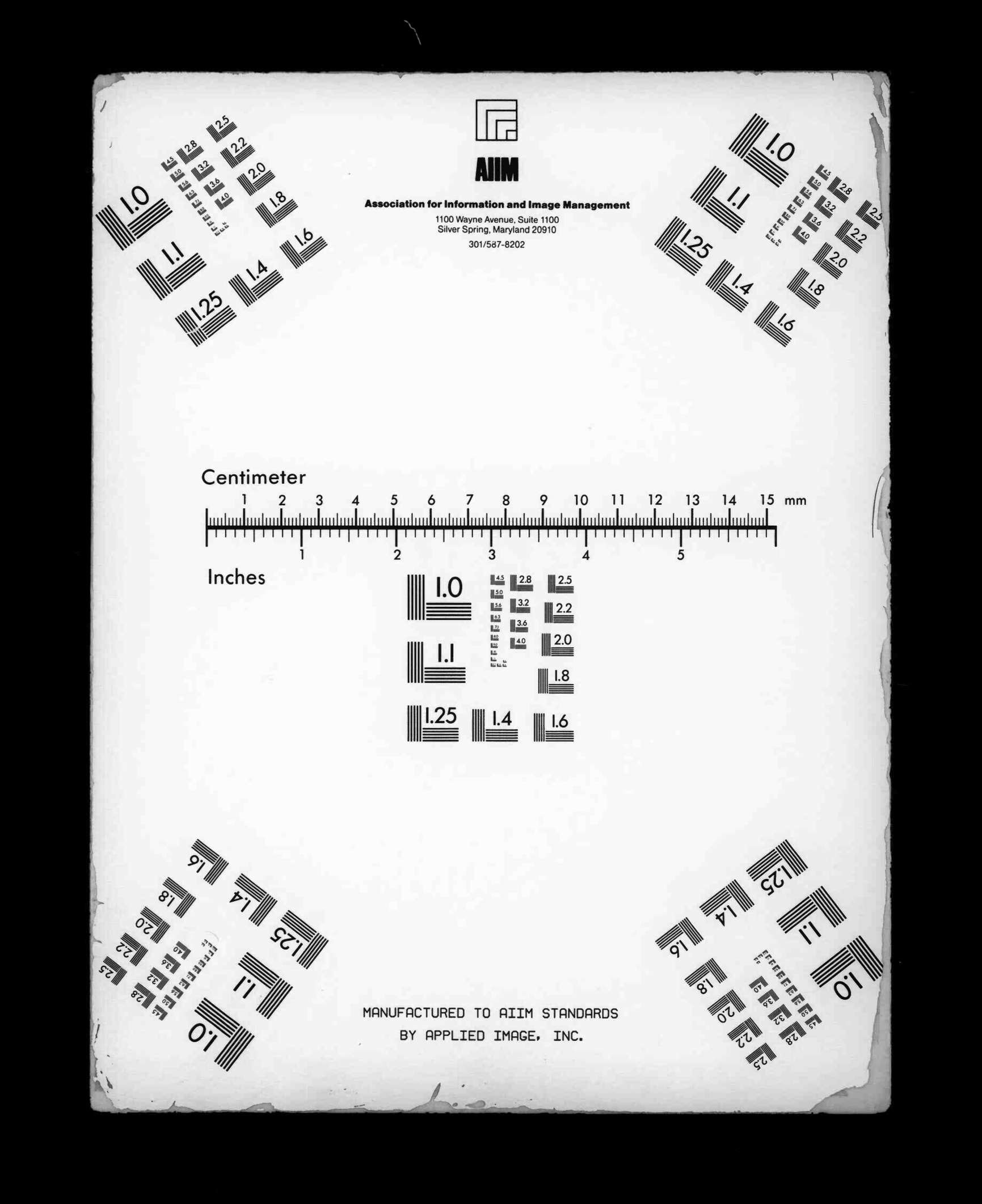
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STUDIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOL IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

A Thesis approved for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of London

BY

OLIVE MARY BUSBY, M.A.

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STUDIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOL IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

INTRODUCTION

> Some talk of things of state, of puling stuff:
> There's nothing in a play to a clown, if he
> Have the grace to hit on't; that's the thing indeed:
> The king shows well, but he sets off the king.

THE dramatic ideals expressed by the Mayor of Queenborough in these words are fairly representative of those of the Elizabethan playgoer in general. The popularity of the fool was one of the most striking features of the English stage at the time of its greatest glory. It can be proved over and over again from contemporary references, usually satirical outbursts from writers whose taste and sense of propriety were outraged by the intrusion of the buffoon into the sphere of serious drama, in flagrant defiance of classic precedent. These critics spent their strength largely in vain; the delight of the people in the clown[1] was, for a long time, at least, strong enough to prevail over academic criticism. Hall, Jonson, and others might satirize the taste of the public, but in spite of their sarcasms the fool remained for many a year in the popular estimation 'the finest man in the company'. How strong an attraction he exerted is proved by the stress usually laid on his rôle in the titles of the plays. It was not sufficient to advertise a piece as *A Knack to know a Knave*; special mention had to be made of 'Kemp's applauded Merrimentes of the men of Goteham'. Without a fool, unless some other powerful attraction was substituted, a play was liable to become 'caviare to the general'. And this the dramatists speedily recognized, and with but few exceptions they yielded to the cry of the playgoers, and gave them what they demanded, the more readily when they came to realize that 'to intermingle merry jests in a serious matter' is no

[1] The terms 'clown' and 'fool' will be used synonymously in this study, as is generally the case in the plays themselves.

'indecorum', but rather a more faithful representation of nature than drama that is wholly comic or wholly tragic.

Whence came this insistent demand of the English public for the buffooneries of the fool? In the case of the earliest forms of drama one reason is obvious. Mysteries and Moralities were edifying, no doubt, but the latter in particular must frequently have become wearisome, especially to the less devout members of the audience; therefore the Devil and the Vice were introduced to provide a little diversion in the form of buffoonery, always dear to the uncultivated mind, and conspicuous in every form of popular drama. This development, however, was by no means peculiar to England. It was directly paralleled, as will be shown later, by the introduction of a fool into the French Mysteries. Doubtless, too, the stage fool satisfied another want—the desire of the public for a satirical commentary on the life and events of the times, now largely supplied by 'Punch' and his lesser brethren, but then impossible except under the protection of the cap and bells. But this function, again, cannot be regarded as the chief source of the peculiar love of the English people for the fool. In England he played a much more prominent part in the history of the drama than elsewhere, for there he enjoyed not only a far longer life but also a far wider range and licence than in other European countries, where he had no such recognized entrée into serious and even tragic drama. It seems, therefore, as if the extraordinary vogue of the English clown must have been due to some quality inherent in the English nature. Such a quality undoubtedly exists, but its nature is easier to illustrate than to define. It is that same instinct which prompts the Englishman to take refuge in a joke whenever he feels in danger of appearing unduly sentimental or serious, and to jest in the face of misfortune, peril, or even certain death. The close blending of comedy and tragedy characteristic of the Elizabethan drama was being paralleled daily five years ago in the almost incredible stories from our trenches and battleships—stories at which we laughed irresistibly, but with a lump in the throat.

And as delight in the stage fool was a particularly English taste, so too the fool himself, in consequence of the importance of his part upon our stage, and the care bestowed upon it by our dramatists, acquired an essentially English character. The French fools mentioned above are in the main conventional jesters, and we do not feel that they are French in the same way that the English clown, in spite of the variety of influences which seem to have been at work in his development, is English. His distinctive character was

evidently recognized in other countries. From the time that English players began to visit Germany,[1] we find constant references to 'John, the English clown', not only in connexion with the English actors but also in the titles of German plays, into which, owing to his great success in Germany, the clown was introduced. Such a play is Ayrer's *Tyranny of Queen Gout*, where a prominent character is 'Jahn Klan, der engellendisch Narr'.

What then was this famous 'English clown'? Everyone knows what Shakespeare's fools are, and knows too that they represent the very consummation of clownage. But they are too often regarded as separate growths, independent creations of Shakespeare's genius, instead of being considered in relation to the host of fools who exist in the works of other Elizabethan dramatists—fools who are often worthy of consideration for their own merits, and always as showing the general development of clownage. The object of this study, then, is not to deal with Shakespeare's clowns in themselves—that would be superfluous labour—but to take the *average* Elizabethan clown, to trace his origin and the lines on which he developed, both as a dramatic and as an individual character. And in the course of this process, the fact will, I hope, incidentally appear, that Shakespeare's fools are no independent growth, but have their place in the regular succession of stage merry-makers, owing much to their predecessors, and in their turn handing on the tradition, infinitely enriched, to their successors. Yet this comparison of Touchstone and his brother fools with the less noted Elizabethan fools (a comparison which cannot always be made formally, but will continually be kept in view) should at the same time show more vividly than ever how infinitely, in clownage as in all other respects, Shakespeare's genius transcended that of his rivals. Good clowns, as it will be seen, are not lacking in the works of other dramatists, but not even the best of them can approach Lear's fool, Touchstone, Feste, or even Bottom. Apart from their inferiority in wit and humour and in dramatic importance, they have another constant weakness—they are rarely more than clowns, whereas Shakespeare's fools are human beings. If these points are brought out in this study, it will not have failed of its purpose.

[1] About 1590. See Cohn, *Shakespeare in Germany*.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF THE ENGLISH STAGE FOOL

'STULTORUM numerus infinitus est.' This, the favourite text of the mediaeval satirists, also describes one prominent feature of mediaeval life. For the fools of the Middle Ages, if not exactly infinite in number, at least formed a goodly host, and were by no means confined to any one part of the life of the times. The courts and great households had as a matter of course their professional fools; the church had its Feast of Fools; Fool Societies carried on the tradition of the Feast in secular life; and literature had its 'Ship of Fools' and many other writings of a similar type. Hence it was only natural that when the mediaeval drama arose the stage too should have its fool. Moreover, since the fools of the day were so varied, it was natural that the stage buffoon, being subject to so many influences, should be of a distinctly complex character; and this is undoubtedly the case. The difficulty in dealing with his origin is not to find possible sources—of these there is no lack—but to decide what part each played in determining his character. It may be admitted at once that the complete performance of this task is impossible. Many of the stage clown's comic devices are part of the common stock-in-trade of merry-makers of all ages—crude and boisterous horse-play, coarse personal satire, gibes at women and love, and the like—and in the case of other characteristics it is impossible to decide from which of several likely sources they were drawn. All that can be done here is to indicate each of the various possible sources of influence, pointing out any characteristic which seems to have been derived from that source rather than from any other. The use which the English stage fool made of these characteristics will be described more fully later; the object of this chapter is rather to show what influences were at work during his development, and how they operated.

The oldest of these influences is probably that exerted by those strolling 'variety entertainers', called variously joculators, jugglers, jongleurs, and many other names, who wandered all over Western Europe in the Middle Ages, earning a precarious livelihood by their performances in the various towns and great houses. For these

jongleurs appear to have been the mediaeval successors of the buffoons of the Roman drama in the time of its decay. With this question in general it is not necessary to deal at length here, since the evidence, consisting mostly of attacks on the stage and, later, of attacks on the minstrels or joculators, has already been collected more than once.[1] Fragmentary as it is, almost certainly there emerges from it the fact that the jongleurs combined in varying proportions the qualities of the honoured bard of Germanic times and the coarse and licentious buffoons of the later Roman stage, often adding to these, acrobatic and other tricks acquired from other strolling entertainers of the Middle Ages.

Proof is not wanting that performers of this type found their way to England at an early date. In the eighth century we find the beginning of a series of clerical attacks on the once-revered 'scop'—attacks which are not justified by anything in his poetry, and can only be explained by the supposition that the type had become debased by the influence of performers of a lower class. This hypothesis is supported by the confusion of nomenclature in Anglo-Saxon glosses and vocabularies, where such different terms as 'mimus', 'comicus', 'joculator', 'cantator', 'poeta', are impartially translated as 'gligmon' or 'scop'.[2] In all probability the intercourse between England and the Continent in ecclesiastical matters was largely responsible for the early introduction of the jongleurs into England, but doubtless this invasion became much more considerable after the Conquest. We hear, for example, of the importation of 'joculatores' by William Longchamps. That there was a great number of entertainers of various kinds in England by the twelfth century is evident from John of Salisbury's attack on 'mimi, salii vel saliares, balatrones, aemiliani, gladiatores, palaestritae, gignadii, praestigiatores, malefici quoque multi, et tota joculatorum scena.'[3]

It is possible, therefore, to trace the origin of the English nomadic buffoons of the Middle Ages to the Roman mimes, but it is a more difficult matter to determine the exact nature of their influence upon the stage fool, since our knowledge of the nature of their performances is unfortunately extremely vague. In the first place it is necessary to differentiate between the various types of jongleur, as does Thomas of Cabham in his attack in his *Penitential*.[4] Obviously any influence exerted by the jongleurs upon the clown must have come from those

[1] See Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, vol. i; also Mantzius, *History of Theatrical Art*, vol. i, for the Roman buffoons.

[2] Wright-Wülcker, *Latin and Anglo-Saxon Vocabularies*.

[3] *Polycraticus*, i. 8 (*c.* 1156).

[4] Thomas died in 1313.

classes which Thomas condemns—'Quidam transformant et transfigurant corpora sua per turpes saltus et per turpes gestus . . . vel induendo horribiles larvas . . . Sunt etiam alii qui nihil operantur, sed sequuntur curias magnatum et dicunt opprobria et ignominias de absentibus ut placeant aliis.' From other accounts we gather that jesting formed an important part of these entertainments, and it is easy to see that a performance including dancing, gesture, and masking, accompanied by jests, might easily develop into something of the nature of drama.

There is unfortunately no certain proof as far as England is concerned that the performances of the jongleurs ever took definitely dramatic form; but there are several pieces of evidence that this was the case in France,[1] and in view of the close intercourse between the two countries, it seems fairly safe to extend the application to England. And the absence of undoubted traces of plays given by jongleurs in England in no way proves that those plays did not exist, for such rude, unliterary pieces, largely improvised, and often, probably, never written down, would only survive by accident. The Roman mimes were essentially players of farces, and it seems unlikely that their successors, the jongleurs, dropped this form of entertainment altogether during the Middle Ages, particularly as they took it up again later. When the regular drama arose and the better class of minstrels decayed, the buffoons preserved themselves by becoming actors too, and these travelling companies of 'players of interludes', as they were now called, survived throughout Tudor times.

It seems likely, though there is not much evidence to prove it, that the important part of comedian in the religious plays given by the amateur performers of the guilds, was sometimes filled by one of these professional jesters. Gringore's friend, Pontalais, a popular strolling actor, was hired in this way to play the fool in the French mysteries; and in the records of Bungay we find a payment to a 'vice' in 1558 for 'pastyme' before and after plays which seem to have been Miracles.[2] If such was the case, the descendants of the Roman mimes were our first stage fools. Probably, too, the strolling buffoons sometimes took part in the performances of the Fool

[1] There are references to plays given by jongleurs, e.g. at Abbeville (see Louandre's *History of Abbeville*), and several rudimentary farces survive, e.g. *L'Enfant et l'Aveugle*. The fragment known as the *Interludium de Clerico et Puella* may possibly have formed part of a farce played by the jongleurs in England. On French jongleurs see Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Age*.

[2] Churchwardens' Accounts for Bungay Holy Trinity.

Societies, of which more will be said later. But in any case the jongleur undoubtedly exercised an influence on the English clown, in that by his performances—his singing, dancing, and tumbling feats accompanied by crude patter and coarse jokes—he established a tradition of comic acting before the rise of the literary drama.

In this he was assisted by a closely-connected personage—the court or domestic fool. Enough has been written on this subject to render any detailed account superfluous here, but it may be said by way of reminder that the fool, either natural idiot or professional jester, was an institution in courts and great households long before the rise of the written drama in England. (Some, indeed, would trace a connexion between the Teutonic 'þyle' and the court fool.) Hence, since he continued to flourish in England until Commonwealth times, he was a well-known figure in society throughout the whole period of the Elizabethan drama, and it was inevitable that he should play a prominent part in the development of the Elizabethan stage-clown.

One way in which his influence was exerted has already been indicated—the establishment of a tradition of comic acting. As Mr. Symonds has said of the court fools, 'The occasional and extemporaneous jesting of these men passed by degrees into settled types of presentation. . . . When formal plays came into fashion by the labour of the learned, these professional comedians struck the key-note of character.' It was natural that dramatists, especially court dramatists, should in sketching their buffoons draw their inspiration largely from fools with whom they were so well acquainted. And it was not only in the households of monarchs and nobles that the fools were known. The court fools at least were public personages. They accompanied the king on his progresses, and the frequency with which rewards to them are mentioned in town records suggests that they played a somewhat important rôle on these occasions. Their jokes are quoted and their tricks described in contemporary writings, and their names seem to have been household words.

Moreover, the court jesters often came into close connexion with the stage. It is clear from extant records ranging from Henry II's reign to Elizabethan times that they frequently took an active part in court revels—mummings, masques, and the like.[1] In the time of the Tudors there was a distinct dramatic element in these revelries, and regular plays were beginning to form part of them, so it is

[1] See *Loseley MSS.*, ed. Kempe.

possible that sometimes the court fool became for the nonce a stage fool. In any case, this connexion with the stage is significant.

It appears that the court and domestic fools began to influence the stage clown in the earliest stage of his existence—that is, while he was represented by the Vice. Some critics altogether deny the connexion of the Vice and the domestic fool, or at least date it very late, when the Morality was in process of decay.[1] This question is part of the larger problem of the essential nature of the Vice, which will be discussed more fully later, but that part of the problem which relates to the domestic fool must be considered here.

In the earliest extant Morality, *Pride of Life*,[2] which probably dates from about 1400, the character Mirth or Solas, in whom we may perhaps see the germ of the later Vice, strongly suggests the court jester, though an unusually active one. He is the king's professional merry-maker, as well as his messenger, beloved by his master for the amusement which he provides. The king says of him:

> Mirthe and solas he can make
> And ren so the ro;
> Lightly lepe oure the lake
> Quher-so-ever he go;

and he remarks himself as he runs off gaily singing:

> I am Solas, I must singe
> Over al quher I go.

It may be objected that such a doubtful character as Mirth is no proof, and as so few plays of the fifteenth century have been preserved, it is difficult to find early corroborative evidence. But a strong piece of such evidence may be found in Skelton's *Magnificence*, dating from the beginning of the next century, for Fancy and Folly, though they both play a prominent part in leading Magnificence astray, also bear unmistakable resemblances in many respects to the domestic fool.[3] Allusions to various parts of their dress prove fairly clearly that they wore the conventional garb of folly, and Fancy's falcon and Folly's mangy dog would be suitable and natural appurtenances of domestic fools. There are some hints, too, that Fancy is a dwarf—another suggestion of influence from the 'allowed' fool; and both he and Folly indulge in favourite fool's tricks, such as inconsequent answers and nonsense rimes. Moreover, the two characters are differentiated, apparently representing the two types

[1] e.g. Cushman, *Devil and Vice in English Literature before Shakespeare*.

[2] Ed. Waterhouse, *Non-Cycle Mystery Plays*.

[3] For a full discussion of Fancy and Folly see Ramsay's edition of *Magnificence*: Introduction.

of fool. Fancy, although the moving spirit in the intrigue, strongly suggests the natural fool, for he is generally acknowledged even by himself to be weak-witted. Folly describes him rudely:

> Thou art so feeble-fantastycall,
> And so braynsyke therwithall,
> And thy wit wandrynge here and there,
> That thou cannyst not growe oute of thy boyes gere:

and this description is justified frequently by Fancy's behaviour, as when he makes tactical blunders in dealing with Magnificence, or lets Folly cheat him. Folly, on the other hand, seems to represent the professional jester. His part in the plot is to keep the prince amused. He is far shrewder than Fancy, whom he cheats in their chaffering over the dog, and he is quick at repartee. Many epithets suitable to the artificial and natural fool respectively are applied to him and Fancy.

The influence of the domestic fool appears again in Heywood's Vices, the first personages so called. Mery Report, in particular (in *The Play of the Wether*, 1534), is a merry-maker pure and simple, bearing a strong resemblance to the court jester. He enters Jove's service as usher, and jests with all the suitors who come to the court. Apparently, too, he wears fool's dress, for Jove objects at first to his 'light behaviour and array'.

No other undoubted Vices bear such definite resemblances to the domestic fool as do Heywood's, though the presence of the jester Hardy-Dardy in *Godly Queen Hester*, written before 1561, is suggestive. But the commoner type of Vice also has tricks reminiscent of the professional jester—inconsequent answers, quibbling, and the like. It may be noted, too, that in order to lead mankind astray, the Vice frequently enters his service, and becomes, not his fool, perhaps, but at least his Master of the Revels, and in some degree his jester.[1] In view then of the fact that the earliest Vices so called are strongly reminiscent of the domestic fool, and of the occurrence of such characters as Fancy and Folly and Hardy-Dardy, also of the fact that comic devices used by these personages constantly recur in the rôles of other Vices, it seems safe to conclude that the court or domestic fool was from the first largely instrumental in determining the character of the Vice.

In the regular drama, curiously enough, the domestic fool proper is a comparatively rare figure. Apart from Shakespeare's fools there are barely a dozen examples in the whole of the Elizabethan drama.

[1] e.g. Sensual Appetite in *The Four Elements*.

But in many cases it is difficult to distinguish the clown-proper from the domestic fool; and this likeness, which renders classification difficult, proves that the conventional stage clown must have inherited a good deal from the domestic fool. The nature of this inheritance will be described more fully in a later chapter. One prominent feature of it is the close personal connexion between fool and master, so characteristic of Shakespeare's fools. It is where we see this personal attachment, where, as in the case of some of Thomas Heywood's clowns, we see the servant following his master's fortunes throughout the play, often grumbling at his hardships, real or imagined, offering cynical comments on the situation, and jesting in and out of season, but often, too, conveying sound advice in his jests, and sometimes showing true devotion—it is there that we may assume with certainty the indebtedness of the clown in question to the domestic fool.

And still more than in the case of the Vice, in the regular drama some of the clown's tricks seem to owe their origin to the professional jester. Doubtless some of these were handed down from the Vice, while others were derived directly. The clown's love of quibbling and playing at cross-purposes, a favourite trick of the all-licensed domestic fool; his high opinion of his importance, a natural characteristic of so popular a personage as the court fool; his habit of referring to his wisdom in comparison with others' folly; his quaint names, often those of animals or common objects, with which may be compared 'John Goose, my lord of Yorkes fole'[1], all these points, and probably others, too, indicate the influence of the professional fool. The question of influence in dress will be discussed later.

One other point which appears suggestive is the fact that the stage fool disappeared at about the same time that the custom of maintaining domestic and court fools fell into decay. This point, however, must not be over-emphasized, since the clown had begun to lose favour on the stage while the fool was still an institution in the court and the mansion.

So much then for the professional fools. But these were not the only class to don the mask of folly. There were also the amateur merry-makers of the Feast of Fools and the Fool Societies which carried on the traditions of the religious festival; and these, too, had their share in the development of the English stage clown. Besides doubtless helping to suggest and popularize the introduction of the fool on the stage, they left several distinct traces on the rôle. The

[1] *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York*, ed. Nicolas, p. 2.

most characteristic of these was that left by the 'sermons joyeux', those ridiculous medleys of mock-pious exhortations, learned allusions and scurrility, full of dog-Latin and religious tags, which, originating in the mock services of the Feast of Fools, later played a prominent part in the performances of the Fool Societies, who delighted to parody both the religious sermon and the rhetorical disquisition of the schools.[1] Of the formal 'sermon joyeux' there are but two examples in the English drama—that delivered by Folly at the close of the 'Satire of the Three Estaits', describing various classes of fools, and the discourse of Herod's fool in *Archi-Propheta*,[2] based nominally on the opening verses of Genesis, but in reality consisting of a disquisition on folly and satire of society, particularly women. It concludes:

> Quid est Patriarchus? Patriarchus. Et quid est
> Morio? morio. Quid foemina? quid? nisi fatua.
> Et spiritus Domini motus per aquas fuit.

But the 'sermons joyeux' had a wider influence than this, as will be shown later. Crude and coarse as these effusions often were, they contained the germ which was to develop into the delightful mock-learned disquisitions or soliloquies of the best of the Elizabethan clowns.

Another form of entertainment characteristic of the Fool Societies which seems to have influenced stage clownage in some measure is the 'sottie'. It is useless to look for much influence as regards characterization from the fools of these plays, for they are usually only types. As Julleville says, 'Le sot . . . symbolise l'homme en général et les grands en particulier, abandonnés à la bêtise et au vice qui sont au fond de nos instincts. Pour les représenter dans tous leurs rôles, le fou n'est jamais lui-même; il est tour à tour roi, pape, etc. . . . et toujours fou sous ses divers costumes.' Influence upon the clown is rather to be sought in the general characteristics and the underlying idea of the 'sottie', an idea parallel to that which inspired the Feast of Fools—the conception of the whole world given up to the service of Folly. In all probability this was largely instrumental in making the clown a vehicle for satire, for the 'sottie' was in its very essence a satire of society. A typical example is one which ends with the resolve of the World to cease to attempt to set himself right, and to yield unreservedly to Folly. Political satire is also sometimes found, as in *L'Astrologue*. In the Middle Ages liberty of speech could only be enjoyed under the mask of folly, but under that mask it was complete; and the 'sottie' introduced this liberty upon the stage. The social satire which is so freely uttered by the English

[1] For examples see Leroux de Lincy's collection.

[2] Grimald, *Archi-Propheta*, ii. 9 (1547).

clowns, such as Pompey's court, camp, city and country 'news', or political satire such as that of the jigs, is often sufficiently reminiscent of the manner of the 'sotties' to suggest influence from that source.[1]

It has also been pointed out that the chop-logic of Heywood's interludes, which is the forerunner of the rough wit-combats of the Elizabethan clowns, may owe something to the dialogue of the 'sotties'. Another point which may have some bearing on the clowns' style is the number of proverbs and 'dictons populaires' found in these plays—sometimes in very large numbers, as in *Les Menus Propos*.

It will be noticed that the 'sotties' mentioned above are all French. It seems likely that the influence exerted by the Fool Festivals and Fool Societies on the English clown came largely by way of France, for neither the religious nor the secular revels appear to have prevailed at all generally in England. There are a few references to the Feast of Fools during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but apparently the attacks which they represent[2] were soon successful, for after 1391 we hear no more of the Feast, though references to the allied festival of the Boy Bishop continue until the sixteenth century. And of the Fool Societies there is hardly a trace;[3] therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that they can never have obtained any vogue in England. But in France the Feast was not definitely suppressed till the middle of the sixteenth century, and the Fool Societies flourished throughout the whole period of the rise of the Elizabethan drama. In view, then, of the constant intercourse between England and France, it seems possible that the influence of the Feast of Fools upon the English clown operated largely through the 'sociétés joyeuses' of France.

This hypothesis would help to explain the resemblances which exist between the English clown and the fool who appear in several French Mysteries, dating from the middle of the fifteenth century. In some cases it is impossible to form any clear idea of these French fools, but in at least one Mystery, *St. Didier*, performed in 1482, we find a well-developed jester, worthy as regards the quality of his humour to rank with English buffoons of a later date. But though direct interaction between these fools and the English Vice is possible,

[1] For 'sotties' see Picot's collection.

[2] e.g. Statutes of Arundel for the Government of Beverley Minster, 1391 (Poulson, *Beverlac*, p. 592).

[3] Practically the only trace is a mandate of Bishop Grandisson in 1348 to the Dean of Exeter and Rector of St. Paul's, commanding the prohibition of a certain disreputable society known as the 'Order of Brothelyngham'.

it is hardly necessary to suppose it. Most of the common characteristics are the conventional qualities of buffoonery in all ages; and a noticeable point of difference between the French fool and the Vice is the absence of any attempt to connect the former with the main action of the play. Possibly, therefore, the resemblances between the English and French merry-makers were the result of parallel development. Almost certainly the fool came into the French mysteries from the Fool Societies, and it is not difficult to imagine how that development took place, as it appears that after the secularization of the religious plays, the 'sociétés joyeuses' sometimes joined forces with the graver societies who produced the Mysteries to give joint performances. If, then, the French Fool Societies also influenced the English clown, up to a certain point there might well be parallel development in the two countries, since the jongleurs and professional fools, the other early sources of influence, were common to both.

The French 'sotties' were paralleled to some extent by the German 'Fastnachtspiele', or carnival plays, which often resembled them in subject. No definite proof of the direct influence of these plays can be traced, though a resemblance between them and Heywood's interludes has been noted; but they must at least be mentioned, in view of their probable influence upon the German fool literature, which culminated in Brandt's *Narrenschiff*, published at Basel, one of the chief centres of the carnival plays. The influence exerted on the English clown by this book, translated into English by Barclay in 1509, and imitated by various writers, cannot be doubted.[1] It probably acted chiefly along the same lines as did the 'sottie', emphasizing the idea of the reign of folly, and tending to popularize the fool, and to make him a favourite vehicle for satire. The resemblance of the one extant jig, Tarlton's *Horse-Load of Fools*, to literature of this type is significant. It may be noted, too, that the series of vivid portraits which composes the *Ship of Fools* (almost an embryonic drama, indeed), aided the transition from the abstractions of the Moralities to the concrete figures of the regular drama. One more point may be mentioned—the prevalence of proverbial expressions in the *Ship of Fools*—but the clowns' proverbs have already been noticed in connexion with the 'sotties', and must be noticed again in connexion with the rustic.

Another type of German literature which certainly left its mark on the clown was the jest-book. Several of the collections of anecdotes

[1] For German and English fool literature see Herford, *Literary Relations of Germany and England in the Sixteenth Century*.

which gathered round the names of Eulenspiegel, Markolf, and other famous traditional jesters, sometimes court fools, sometimes personages of more popular origin, were translated into English during the sixteenth century, and imitated in such English collections as *Skelton's Tales*, or *Scoggin's Tales*, or, later, and most noteworthy of all, *Tarlton's Jests*. From the jest-books, German and English, was undoubtedly derived much of the 'picaresque' element in the fool's rôle, his roguery, his rude practical jokes, and his coarse jests—the 'humour of filth', as it has been called.

But here, as in other respects, foreign influence must not be exaggerated. It must never be forgotten that besides those influences common to the whole of Western Europe, there was also a purely native influence at work in the development of the stage fool. For alongside of the religious plays which represent the earliest stage of the literary drama of England, a popular drama existed, and had existed in some form for centuries, ever since the old pagan rites on which it was founded lost their original signification.[1] A 'French writer' quoted by Warton, states that the object of the institution of the religious plays was to 'supersede the dancing, music, mimicry, and profane mummeries' beloved of the people. And doubtless at an early date buffoonery of some kind found a place in the 'mimicry and profane mummeries'. How soon the fool proper appeared we do not know, since pre-Tudor references to folk-festivals are few and brief, but it is clear that he was an institution by the fifteenth century[2]—that is, in the early days of the Morality period—and probably he had existed in some form long before. Hence it seems reasonable to suppose that the fool of the regular stage owed something to this popular buffoon. That there should be interaction between the literary and the popular drama was inevitable. Proof of it is seen at an early date in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, where the leech (and possibly also his jesting servant, of whom more will be said later) is undoubtedly borrowed from the spring play, in which the doctor is an essential character. Another indication of interaction is the fact that the devil, who appears as a comic character in the religious plays, is also one of the buffoons of the folk-plays, though here it is doubtful on which side the indebtedness lies. Mr. Ordish has suggested that the influence of the popular on the literary drama operated largely through the guilds, essentially Saxon institutions, maintaining much

[1] On the folk-drama see Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*; Ordish in *Folk Lore*; Beatty, *The St. George or Mummers' Play*; Sharpe, *Sword Dances*, &c.

[2] An engraving of a morris dance dating from about 1460 shows a fool.

infl. of native tradition

of the old native tradition even when their ancient sacrificial rites were replaced by miracle plays.[1]

Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine exactly what part the fool of the folk-festivals played in the development of the stage fool. The buffoon of the mummers' plays as they now exist is not of much weight as evidence, since there is no means of dating his development to his present form, and it is clear that literary and sophisticating influences have been at work. And as to the nature of the character in the early days of its existence there is practically no evidence. Popular, civic, and even court revels are often so imperfectly distinguished in the scanty records which remain, that to disentangle the various elements is a hopeless task. To complicate the question further, there are suggestions of confusion between the folk-revels and the Feast of Fools. But that there was influence from the folk fools on the stage fools seems certain. Perhaps the most definite trace is the tail which sometimes forms part of the latter's dress[2]—constantly worn by the former and undoubtedly a relic of the animals' skins worn by the worshippers who were their protagonists. One of other possible links is the apparent adaptation by the Vice of *Mankind* of a joke found in many versions of the spring play.[3] These points are minor ones, but they are significant of an important one—the influence of native and popular tradition upon the stage fool. Though we are ignorant of the extent and nature of this influence we may be sure of one thing—that it was responsible for the distinctive and essentially native character of the English clown.

We have now enumerated the various types of fool from which an English dramatist of the beginning of the sixteenth century might draw inspiration. But the most common type of English clown is not merely fool or jester; he has other qualities which are not primarily fool characteristics. Very early he shows the influence of the comic servant—an ancient tradition in the drama. The early English religious plays, which have no regular fool, provide several examples of this character. Some of these figures, such as the Shipman's boy in *Mary Magdalene*, are little more than suggestions of ill-disposed boys, and their parts contain practically nothing that can be called humour. There are, however, several better developed characters, who may be represented by Trowle, the shepherd's boy of the Chester Plays, discontented with his wages and food, and ready

[1] In *Folk Lore*, 1891.

[2] e.g. Vices in *King Darius* and *Albion Knight*, and Will Cricket in *Wily Beguiled*.

[3] Furnivall and Pollard, *Macro Plays*, p. 16.

to quarrel and fight. Like him, but more vindictive, are the torturers' attendants of the Townley[1] and Cornish[2] plays, who quarrel with their masters, but not through any sympathy with their victims, towards whom they show quite as much ill will as the torturers themselves.

More closely connected with the clown, apparently, are servants of another class—those who instead of merely wrangling and fighting openly with their masters, ridicule them in asides to the audience, and insult them more or less ingeniously. Such a one is Pike-harness, Cain's boy,[3] who while Cain is crying their peace through the land after murdering Abel, mocks him in audible riming asides:

> *Cain*: I command you in the kyngis nayme,
> *Garcio*: And in my masteres, fals Cayme,
> *C*: That no man at theme fynd fawt ne blame.
> *G*: Yey, cold rost is at my masteres hame.

A better developed character is Colle, the leech's man, already mentioned. He enters seeking his master, and makes a proclamation giving a rude description of him, but when he appears Colle greets him effusively and assures him that:

> Nothyng, Master, but to your reverense,
> I have told all this audiense—
> And some lyes among!

When ordered to proclaim his master's skill he does so in ambiguous but decidedly suggestive terms:

> What dysease or syknesse that ever ye have,
> He will never leve yow tyll ye be in your grave.[4]

Too much stress must not be laid on the comic devices of these servants, since it is impossible to date them with certainty, and possibly other of their rôles besides that of Brewbarret in the York Plays may be later interpolations, influenced by the buffoons of the Moralities. The important point proved by the servants of the religious plays is the early establishment of the tradition of the comic servant, acting as comic chorus to his master's speeches or as a parody of his actions. We may safely conclude that this tradition was established by the middle of the fifteenth century, and

[1] *Buffeting Play.*
[2] *Beunans Meriasek*, translated by Stokes, pp. 207, 217.
[3] Townley plays, *Mactacio Abel.*
[4] *Play of the Sacrament*, ed. Waterhouse, *Non-Cycle Mystery Plays*, pp. 73 and 74.

therefore at least a century before the appearance of the regular Elizabethan clown.

And about the time of his appearance, this impulse seems to have gained strength from a second source—the Zanni or comic servant of the Italian 'commedia dell' arte'. It is certain that the Italian drama was well known in England in Elizabethan times, for not only do many translations and adaptations of the more literary type of play exist, but also there are numerous references to the various 'masks' of the 'commedia' in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries —references which sometimes suggest connexion between the Zanni and the English clown. Florio, in 1598, explains 'Zane' as a name for 'a simple vice, clowne, foole, or simple fellow in a play or comedie'; and Nash calls Kemp a harlequin and remarks that his fame has extended to Italy.

As Miss Smith points out in her study of the 'commedia dell' arte',[1] the relation between the Italian and English stages is probably explicable mainly through direct contact between the actors. English and Italian companies frequently paid simultaneous visits to Continental cities, and as early as 1573 Italian actors began to visit England itself.[2] In 1577 'one Dronsiano, an Italian' received permission to produce plays in London—a fact of considerable significance, for this Dronsiano was undoubtedly Drusiano Martinelli, a famous performer of the rôle of Arlecchino, one of the varieties of Zanni most akin to and most likely to have influenced the English clown.

The qualities of the Zanni may be summarized in Miss Smith's words: 'Always of humble station, usually the servant and confidant of a principal character, sometimes a rascal, sometimes a dunce, oftenest a complex mixture of the two, almost always the chief plot-weaver, his main function was to rouse laughter, to entertain at all costs. One of the means he took to this end was the use of some patois; . . . another was his curious costume and mask; the most effective of all were his actions, his surprisingly dexterous gymnastic feats, his multifarious disguises, and his absurd songs and lazzi.'

It is evident from this description that there are several points of contact between the Zanni and the clown, but to determine what the latter owes to the former is not an easy matter. Of the 'lazzi' themselves not much can be made. As Perucci's list shows, many of

[1] See W. Smith, *Commedia dell' Arte*, for the general question of Italian influence on the English stage.
[2] Revels accounts for 1573 mention performances by 'the Italian players' at Windsor and Reading. See Feuillerat, *Documents*, p. 225, &c.

them are simply the old tricks of the mountebanks from whom the Zanni was largely derived, and the majority are items of ancient popular horseplay by no means peculiar to Italy and found in England before there was any possibility of Italian influence. Such are the lazzi 'of fear', 'of weeping and laughing', or 'of crying loudly'. It is possible that some of the more intellectual tricks—lawyers' quibbles, learned meditations such as Pedrolino's,[1] laments and love-rhapsodies parodying those of the Zanni's master, and the like—may have suggested some of the speeches of the English clowns; but nothing can be definitely proved, and the resemblances which exist may be merely the result of parallel development.

The same may be said to some extent of improvisation, for this again is characteristic of all popular buffoonery, and is found in England at an early date. But possibly there was here at least strengthening influence from the 'commedia dell' arte', since in them not only the incidental jesting but the whole of the dialogue was improvised.

It was as a servant and an intriguer that the Zanni probably exerted his strongest influence on the English clown. Since the Italian masks were beginning to be known in England in the early days of the regular drama, when the clown's position in the play was still undecided, it is likely that the example of the Zanni helped to make him with increasing frequency a jesting servant. Moreover, since the intriguing function of the Zanni became more important as the 'commedia dell' arte' developed, the influence which he exerted tended more and more to turn the clown into an intriguer. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Zanni was largely responsible for the scheming, mocking type of servant-clown (represented by Nimble in *Thomas of Woodstock*, 1591) described in a later chapter. Clowns of this class, as will be shown, tend to lose their fool qualities, and in the later days of the Elizabethan drama we find an increasing number of characters, of the type of Dromio and his fellows in *Mother Bombie*, who are no longer clowns but intriguing servants. Possibly these characters helped to undermine the popularity of the regular clown—certainly it was they who replaced him in the work of the later dramatists.

One more influence which seems to have played its part in the development of the stage clown must be mentioned—that of the stupid rustic. This is suggested in the first place by the fact that the term 'clown', which originally denoted a rustic, became the most common

[1] Scala, *Faithful Pilgrim Lover*.

name for the stage merry-maker.[1] Another indication is seen in the fact that stage fools other than domestic or court fools frequently, as will be shown later, wore the ordinary dress of a countryman.

No influence of the rustic upon the stage buffoon can be traced with certainty till the end of the Morality period; until then the rustic is a quite distinct figure. He appears first in the religious plays, but there is little or no attempt to make comic capital of his characteristics. The first example of a rustic whose stupidity is emphasized is Ignorance, Idleness' boy, in Redford's play of *Wit and Science*, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century—an ill-disposed, apparently half-witted peasant, who speaks an almost unintelligible dialect, and whom Idleness tries in vain to instruct. By the end of the Morality period the rustic had developed into a concrete figure. Usually, as in the case of Rusticus and Hodge of *Horestes*, these characters are simple, honest peasants, the butts of the Vices, who delight in teasing and frightening them and setting them at loggerheads by playing upon their simplicity.

The first and only Vice to show rustic characteristics is the last Morality Vice so called—Idleness in *Wit and Wisdom*, written about 1579. He is a thorough rustic, bearing, as Gayley has pointed out, a distinct resemblance to Diccon of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. He is far less astute than his predecessors, and in his varied adventures is as often the duped as the duper. Snatch, Catch, and Search treat him much as earlier Vices treated their rustic victims.

In the regular drama the influence of the rustic was largely responsible for the development of two types of clown—the mere booby, such as John Adroynes in *Promos and Cassandra*, and the more pretentious clown of the Bottom class, who is not without a certain shrewdness, but so overrates his qualities as to make his deficiencies the more ludicrous. The development of both these classes will be traced later.

The rustic also seems to have influenced the stage fool in general by providing hints for some of his favourite tricks. Misunderstandings, real or pretended, figure prominently among these devices. May not they have been suggested by the innocent blunders of the simple

[1] The earliest example of the use of 'clown' in the stage sense in contemporary literature appears in Rowlands' *Let Humours Blood*, Sat. iv. 63 (1600):

> What means Singer then?
> And Pope the Clowne, to speak so Boorish, when
> They counterfeite the Clownes upon the Stage.

The earliest certain example of its use in this sense in a play occurs in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (before 1588).

countrymen of the earlier plays? The perversion of words, accidental or intentional, seems to have been derived from the same source. The character People innocently calls Respublica 'Rice Pudding-cake', and later clowns find the intentional distortion of a name an excellent way to annoy or amuse. Probably, too, the frequent use of proverbial expressions by the clown was encouraged by the example of the rustic type; but it must be remembered that early Vices who show no other trace of rustic influence use expressions of this kind, and the example of the 'sotties' and fool literature, already mentioned, cannot be left out of account.

The rustic is the last source of influence to be mentioned in dealing with the origins of the English stage fool. How the dramatists developed and combined the hints which they obtained from these various sources, it is the object of the ensuing chapters to show.

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF THE FOOL AS A DRAMATIC CHARACTER

Since the popularity of the stage fool was so great, a dramatist who wished to produce a popular play was confronted with the necessity of introducing him on every possible occasion. 'I would have the fool in every act',[1] was the cry of the people; and how best to satisfy that cry was the problem which the playwrights had to solve. Some, particularly the early anonymous writers of regular drama, seem to have troubled themselves very little on this point. The clown wanders through their plays at his own sweet will, appearing almost whenever he desires or whenever there is a pause in the action to be filled, often without the least pretext, and sometimes spoiling serious or even tragic scenes with his untimely jesting. Since so much of this incidental jesting was improvised, only occasional traces of it have survived.[2] The printer of *Tamburlaine* expressly states that he has omitted 'some fond and frivolous gestures', of no value to the play. But contemporary references show how serious this abuse of the clown's part became. Besides Shakespeare's famous attack, there is an interesting piece of satire of an earlier date on the haphazard introduction of fools. In *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (*c.* 1598–9) occurs a scene[3] which opens with the dragging in of a clown by means of a rope. The clown asks what he is to do, to which query Dromo replies, 'Why, what an ass art thou! dost thou not knowe a play cannot be without a clowne? Clownes have been thrust into plays by head and shoulders ever since Kempe could make a scurvy face; and therefore reason thou shouldst be drawne in with a cart rope.' He then makes a few suggestions, satirizing the public taste in buffoonery, and departs, while the clown remarks, 'This is fine, y' faith! nowe, when they have noebodie to leave on the stage, they bringe mee up, and, which is worse, tell mee not what I shoulde saye!' After he

[1] Goffe, *The Careless Shepherdess*, Proeludium.

[2] e. g. stage direction in *If you know not me you know nobody*—'Enter the clown beating a soldier, and exit.'

[3] Ed. Macray, pp. 22–7.

has gone through a few of the clown's usual tricks, Dromo re-enters and drives him off, since there are now 'other men that will supplie the roome'. The evidence of these two pieces of criticism is supported by numerous other references.

In all probability the dramatists were less responsible for this abuse than the producers of the plays, who were too willing to pander to the public tastes, or the clowns themselves, who were too desirous of constant applause. But on the other hand, the dramatists seem, in many cases, to have submitted very readily to this state of affairs and to have taken little trouble with their fools' parts. In Brome's *Antipodes*, Letoy replies to a defence of extemporizing on the grounds that it was formerly allowed on the stage:

> Yes, in the dayes of Tarlton and of Kempe,
> Before the stage was purg'd from barbarism,
> And brought to the perfection it now shines with.
> Then fools and jesters spent their wits, because
> The Poets were wise enough to save their owne
> For profitabler uses.

It was less likely that a clown would indulge in untimely jesting in a play in which his part was carefully thought out and connected to some extent with the main action, than where he was an independent character, extraneous to the action, and free to make most of his part for himself. As higher dramatic ideals began to prevail, the dramatists seem to have realized that the only way to prevent the clown from spoiling their plays was to develop his part more fully themselves, and to connect it as closely as possible with the main action. They began also to see the dramatic possibilities of the character—to realize that it might be made a real asset in their plays.

To take first the development of the merry-maker's rôle in regard to importance in the intrigue. This question had found a satisfactory solution in the case of the earliest variety of English stage buffoon—the Vice of the Moralities and other transitional plays. Concerning the origin and nature of this Vice much controversy has raged. Some critics, particularly Cushman,[1] deny that this character was originally a buffoon. They consider that he was in the first place an ethical abstraction representing the 'summation' of the Seven Deadly Sins, and acting as the enemy of the good and the tempter of man, and that he only degenerated into a fun-maker in the later Moralities. The name 'Vice' would seem to support this view, for the obvious derivation is doubtless the correct one. But the fact cannot be ignored that in the earliest instances of the occurrence of

[1] *The Devil and Vice in English Literature before Shakespeare.*

the term the characters so called are jesters pure and simple, and the plays in which they occur—Heywood's *Play of Love* (1533) and *Play of the Wether* (1534)—are not Moralities. Cushman would have us believe that the name Vice is a later interpolation here, since it only occurs once in each case, but the same might be said of other instances where he does not doubt its authenticity. Moreover, apart from this early extension of the term to include merry-makers in an interlude, the fact that in the earliest contemporary references to Vices and stage fools the terms seem to be used almost synonymously suggests that the Vice was a buffoon at an early stage in his development.

The best explanation of the difficulty seems to be that offered by Ramsay,[1] who suggests that 'Vice' was the actors' name for the strongest rôle from their standpoint on the side of evil. It became desirable for dramatic purposes to concentrate the interest in one character, not necessarily the most evilly-disposed, but the most often on the stage. In the earliest Moralities this character had the function of messenger or factotum, but as time went on, to strengthen the rôle, more and more of the intrigue was given into his hands. To this character was naturally given the important function of providing comic relief, since if the attention of the public was to be held throughout a Morality, it was imperative that such relief should be introduced as frequently as possible. It was natural, too, that this function should be entrusted to a character on the side of evil, since the evil and the comic had long been associated in the vulgar mind, the devil being the chief comedian of the Mysteries. Hence came the double function of the Vice—the conducting of the intrigue and the providing of amusement.

Ramsay founds this hypothesis largely on the nature of Skelton's Vice figures, Fancy and Folly, pointing out the significant resemblance between them and Heywood's Vices. The question of the indebtedness of these and other early Vice figures to the court fool has already been discussed, and its importance for the problem of the relation of Vice and clown is obvious. Another personage who seems to mark a stage in the development of the Vice is Detractio in the oldest complete Morality extant, *The Castle of Perseverance*.[2] Detractio, or Backbiter, is a messenger in the service of the World, and some trace of the function of the later Vice is seen in the fact that he is sent by the World to introduce Mankind to Covetousness; but on the other hand he is undoubtedly a comic character, equally

[1] Edition of Skelton's *Magnyfycence*, Introduction.

[2] Furnivall and Pollard, *Macro Plays*, pp. 97–100 and 128–32.

ready to get good or evil into trouble if by so doing he can obtain amusement himself. Mirth in *The Pride of Life* is too doubtful a character to furnish any trustworthy evidence, though it is not difficult to imagine that he represents an earlier stage in the development of the type to which Backbiter belongs.

The first clear example of what eventually became the most popular type of Vice in the Moralities is Sensuality in Medwall's *Nature*, written between 1486 and 1500. There are indications of the lines on which the rôle was to develop in *Mankind*, but there the attack of the Vices on Mankind fails, and his downfall is eventually brought about by the demon Tutivillus. But in *Nature* Sensuality is the chief agent in leading Man astray. He takes him to a tavern and introduces him to other disreputable associates, and later, when Man has temporarily repented, wins him back to evil ways, and is only finally defeated by the arrival of Age.

In quite two-thirds of the remaining Moralities proper the Vice rôle is developed along these lines, and where this is the case the problem of introducing the buffoon with frequency finds its best solution, since the leader of the attack on man is of necessity continually upon the stage. A good example of the full development of the double functions of the Vice is Infidelity in Wager's *Repentance of Mary Magdalene* (1566–7), who plays a very prominent part in the action, in that he not only leads Mary astray, but also labours to harden the hearts of the leaders of the Jews against Christ, and at the same time provides constant amusement for the audience. Very similar to this type are the Vices of some of the chief political Moralities, notably *Respublica* (1553), and the *Satire of the Three Estates* (*c.* 1540). In connexion with these plays may be noticed the multiplication of the Vice rôle by three or four—a fairly frequent device in the middle period of the Moralities, but generally abandoned later in favour of concentration of the comic element in one character, *the* Vice.

No other variety of Vice attains a popularity in any degree comparable with that of the type described above, and where he plays other rôles he is rarely so successful from a dramatic point of view. Perhaps the most notable exceptions to this rule are those Vices who appear as the centre of a series of incidents, inculcating the qualities which they represent into various sets of people in turn. A prominent member of this class is Nichol Newfangle (1568), who continually joins 'like to like' in the play of that name. Very inferior in dramatic effect are those Vices who are only introduced in a sub-plot which seems to have little or no connexion with the

main plot, as is the case in *King Darius* (1565). But by far the largest class of Vices is that represented by Infidelity, and this fact is not only important as regards the Vice himself but also significant in regard to his connexion with the later clown. For in many cases this type of Vice, in order to accomplish Man's downfall, temporarily enters his service, and becomes his assistant in the gratification of his desires, and also (as has already been mentioned in connexion with the influence of the domestic fool) to some extent his jester. Since then the most popular type of Vice and the most successful dramatically has these servant qualities, and since Vices of another type, such as Sin in *All for Money* (1577), appear as ushers or factotums, it seems likely that the Vice played his part in making the conventional clown of the regular drama a servant.

Still more suggestive of this connexion between Vice and clown are the Vices of a group of plays which are not Moralities, but tragedies or romances. In each of the tragedies—*Horestes* (1567), *Cambyses* (1569–70), and *Appius and Virginia* (1575)—the Vice is apparently in service, and acts as a moving spirit throughout the play, urging his master and others to follow the particular vice which he embodies. Revenge in particular is definitely a servant, and comes in at the end, when Horestes has dismissed him, seeking a new master, much as some later clowns do. Again, like many clowns, these three Vices have another dramatic function in that as well as playing an active part in the main plot they act as the centre of minor comic incidents. There are traces of these sub-plots in the later Moralities, the climax in this respect being reached in *Wit and Wisdom* (1579), where Idleness, besides leading Wit astray, is the centre of a series of amusing adventures, dovetailed with some skill into the main action. The connexion between the Vice and the comic servant or clown is seen most clearly in the last play of the group, the romance *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* (1599). With Subtle-Shift, the Vice of this play and the last character bearing the name, may be classed Conditions, a very similar character in *Common Conditions* (1576), who, like Subtle-Shift, is the only personage in the play who bears an abstract name. Apart from their names these characters have lost all ethical significance; they are mere self-seeking servants, intriguing for or against their masters as seems profitable to them for the time being. Hence they form a connecting link between the abstract Vice, intriguing against the good, and the concrete intriguing servant of the later drama.

We have seen, then, that in the case of the Moralities the problem of frequent comic relief was solved by concentrating the humour of

the play in a personage who was at the same time the leader of the intrigue against the good. But in the regular drama the buffoon had no such *raison d'être*, and the problem had to be solved afresh. Hence ensued in the early days of the regular drama the chaotic state of affairs described at the beginning of this chapter. As has been mentioned, some of the dramatists seem to have been too well content to leave the introduction of the clown to a considerable extent to the discretion, or lack of discretion, of the actors themselves, but as time went on the playwrights seem to have devoted more and more attention to connecting their clowns with the action of the play, and to giving them a definite part therein. In this respect, as in so many others, it is difficult to trace a chronological development, since the whole Elizabethan drama was compressed into such a short space of time that plays representing very different stages appeared almost simultaneously. But in spite of exceptions and anomalies, a general development on the lines to be indicated below may be traced.

In the first place, it may be said generally that as the drama developed the dramatists showed an increasing tendency to give the clown a place in the play by making him a servant—preferably the servant of one of the principal characters. How the tradition of the comic servant grew up in the days of the religious plays has already been shown, and it has been suggested that in all probability the success of that type of Vice possessing some servant qualities, and later the influence of the Italian Zanni, besides the constant influence of the domestic fool, strengthened that tradition and facilitated its application to the clown in general. Of all the characters specifically called clowns (excluding Shakespeare's, who are practically all retainers) quite half are definitely servants of some description, and in addition there are about as many more servants who are clearly clowns, though the name does not exist in the written versions of the plays. Such are Miles in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and Pipkin in *How to choose a Good Wife from a Bad*. It is significant that as the drama develops the proportion of servant-clowns to others becomes greater; it seems as if the dramatists came consciously or unconsciously to the conclusion that the clown could be most satisfactorily connected with the action as a servant. The advantage of the servant-clown is obvious—he may follow his master wherever he goes, whereas as an unattached character (a bandit, for example, as in Heywood's *Four Prentices of London*) the clown is, or should be, limited to certain scenes, and is much less easily involved in the intrigue. It may be said at once that the servant-fool is seldom more

essential to the action than are the others. In this respect Shakespeare's clowns are exceptions. Nowhere else in the Elizabethan drama do we find a fool with an importance in the action to be compared for one moment with that of Feste or the Fool in *Lear*. As a rule, when the comic servant becomes deeply involved in the intrigue, he loses the character of clown and becomes a knave. But it is obvious that the servant-clown has *ipso facto* a certain place in the intrigue. He is constantly on the stage, and to his part fall naturally such duties as the conveying of letters and messages, the delivery of which is often of considerable importance. And if he does not actually participate in the action independently, he at least as a servant knows all his master's business, and hence is invaluable as a means of conveying necessary information to the audience—an important function which was formerly part of the Vice's rôle. Moreover, his position fits him particularly well for linking a comic sub-plot to the main action—a useful office which cannot so easily be performed by an unattached clown.

The superiority of the servant-clowns to the others from a dramatic point of view may be seen to some extent at the outset if the earliest of the former class, Trotter, the miller's man in *Fair Em* (*c.* 1587), be compared with almost any of the second class for the next seven years (omitting Simplicity, who plays a vital part in *The Three Ladies of London* and its sequel, since though he is a clown the plays are Moralities). In *Sir Thomas More* (*c.* 1590), for example, the clown has the most unsuitable rôle of rebel, and thus has no place in a large portion of the play. He would obviously have had more opportunities for merry-making if he had appeared as More's servant. Trotter, on the other hand, as servant to the heroine of the play and her father, has a far more suitable and advantageous position. He is, moreover, desperately in love with his young mistress, and by appealing to his affection she prevails on him to help her in her attempt to get rid of her undesired suitors by pretending to be deaf and dumb. Thus if he is not exactly essential to the plot he has at least a suitable position to fill, and a duty to perform.

As was only natural, the non-servant clown shared to some extent in the general improvement in the dramatic status of the clown which accompanied the gradual establishment of higher artistic standards. Before the last few years of the sixteenth century this class do not show much development dramatically, but Strumbo of *Locrine* (1594) marks a distinct advance, not only on the clown who appears in one scene of *Dr. Faustus* and who represents the earliest and crudest

stage, but also on the rather better developed class represented by the rebel clowns of *Sir Thomas More* and *Jack Straw*. Much of the superiority of Strumbo is due to more careful and skilful characterization, but here, as is usually the case, development in characterization goes hand-in-hand with dramatic development, for besides acting as the centre of a comic sub-plot, being pressed into the army of Albanact, he has his part in the series of battles of which the main plot principally consists.

In the last years of the sixteenth century and the first few years of the next a marked improvement in the treatment of the clown began to appear, due, doubtless, to some extent to the influence of Greene and Shakespeare. The effect of this influence is seen most clearly in the servant-clowns, but traces of its operation are not wanting in characters of another type. In 1595, the very year after the appearance of *Locrine*, we find one of the best (dramatically) developed clowns of the non-servant class in the whole Elizabethan drama—Turnop, the leader of the rustics in Munday's play, *John a Kent and John a Cumber*. He has a suitable place in the drama, in so much as he and his companions prepare an address of welcome for some of the principal characters, and also he and his friends, in helping to bring about the discomfiture of John a Cumber, play no insignificant part in the main action. As will be shown later in dealing with the subject of characterization, Turnop probably owes a good deal to Bottom (though this point is not absolutely certain, owing to the doubt which exists as to the date of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,[1]) in which case the character is a clear proof of the early working of Shakespeare's influence on the clowns of his contemporaries.

From about this time the proportion of non-servant to servant-clowns becomes considerably smaller, and the few of the first type who still exist are usually connected with some care with the main action. Thus Will Cricket in *Wily Beguiled* (1606), besides acting as the centre of a series of comic scenes with which some of the principal characters are likewise connected, also has a part in the main action, as conveyor of information. A clown who is connected in a different but not inartistic way with the main action is Gnotho of *The Old Law* (*c.* 1599), who is the leading figure in a comic sub-plot

[1] The first transcript of *John a Kent* is dated Dec. 1595, whereas the evidence points to the beginning of that year or the end of 1594 as the date of the composition of the *Dream*. But it is just possible that *John a Kent* is identical with *The Wise-man of West Chester*, performed Dec. 2, 1594.

which is a parody of the main plot and turns upon the same motif—the making of the new law and its consequences.

But if there is a general development in the dramatic treatment of the clown, this development is particularly marked in the case of that type of fool which became most popular—the servant-clown. Since clowns of this type are so numerous, any detailed account of them is out of the question: all that can be done is to indicate a few characters representing progressive stages. Trotter, the earliest example of the type (apart from court and domestic fools proper, who may be left out of the question for the time being, since their rôles vary little, and show little chronological development) has already been described. His superiority to contemporary non-servant clowns is manifest, but it is also obvious that his creator has by no means fully grasped the possibilities of the clown as a dramatic character.

In this respect, as in others, Greene's clowns represent the high-water mark before Shakespeare. Miles in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589–90), and Slipper in *James IV* (1598), both have their parts in the action—Miles in wasting his master's seven years' labour by failing to wake him as soon as the brazen head speaks, and Slipper in stealing from his master Ateukin the letters which Bartram needs. But apart from these definite duties, both these clowns, particularly Slipper, are so cleverly and judiciously introduced into the action throughout, that it is difficult to imagine the plays without them. Slipper at least may be regarded as an integral part of the play in which he figures. He cannot, however, be regarded as representative of the servant-clown in general towards the end of the sixteenth century. During the ten years which elapsed between the appearances of Greene's two clowns, contemporary dramatists apart from Shakespeare produced no clownish servant worthy even to compare with Miles, though there are traces of a gradual general improvement. Perhaps the most notable figures of this period are Nimble, Trissillian's intriguing servant in *Thomas of Woodstock* (1591); Piston of *Soliman and Perseda* (1592), who acts as conveyor of information between the chief characters, and also takes part in a comic underplot with a braggart knight of whom he always gets the better; and Gunophilus, Pandora's unfortunate attendant in *The Woman in the Moone* (1597), who is really essential to the action in that he is the victim of all the caprices of his mistress, and the instrument used by her in the carrying out of her intrigues.

But by the end of this period Shakespeare's fools were beginning to appear. Bottom, Launce, and Launcelot had preceded Slipper, and Touchstone and Feste followed two or three years later. And

from this time becomes noticeable that marked improvement in dramatic treatment noticed in connexion with non-servant clowns, with this difference, that in the case of the servant-fools it is far more pronounced. How marked was the advance is proved by the fact that in describing the rôle of an average clown of the beginning of the seventeenth century more of the story of the play is involved than in the case of the average clown of some six or eight years before. Shadow, in *Old Fortunatus* (1600), may be compared in this way with Adam in *A Looking-Glass for London and England* (1594). Moreover, though clowns who play a prominent part in the intrigue itself are still exceptional, they appear with increasing frequency. Such are Hodge in *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (1602), who rescues the Earl of Bedford by impersonating him, and Stilt in *Hoffmann* (probably acted the same year), who tries throughout the play to guide his foolish master aright by good advice, and even raises a rebellion in support of his cause.

From this point it is almost impossible to trace chronological development further. Henceforth clowns vary in accordance with the degree of skill possessed by their creators, rather than in accordance with any general tendencies. As might be expected, even at this period of the stage fool's fullest development there are lapses. Frog, for example, in *The Fair Maid of Bristow* (1604), only appears two or three times in the written version of the play, and has no weight whatever in the action; and in Heywood's chronicle play *If you know not me you know nobody* (1605–6), the clown, though presumably one of Elizabeth's train, wanders through the play almost at haphazard. But apparently the difficulty of successfully introducing a clown into a chronicle play was largely responsible for the faults of *If you know not me*, and that of introducing such a typically British character into classical stories for the weakness of such plays as *The Golden Age*, for Heywood's best clowns are some of the most noteworthy of their kind, and represent the fullest development of the clown along regular lines. They will be described in more detail in connexion with the question of characterization, but the rôle of one of them, Simkin in *Fortune by Land and Sea* (perhaps written about 1607–9), may be sketched here,[1] in order to give some idea of the average importance in the

[1] Cf. with Simkin, Roger in *The English Traveller*, Clem in *The Fair Maid of the West*, and Fiddle in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, among Heywood's clowns—also many others, e. g. Shorthose in Fletcher's *Wit without Money*, or Pipkin in *How to choose a Good Wife from a Bad*.

action of the best clowns of Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors.

Simkin is the servant of old Harding, father of Philip, the hero of the play. On his first appearance he informs his master, who has sent him to seek Philip, that the latter is about to make a match with Susan Forrest. At that moment the lovers appear, and a dispute with the father ensues. Simkin declares that he intends to 'stick to the stronger side', but he joins in Mrs. Harding's pleading for Philip. When Philip and Susan are made his fellow-servants, he is genuinely distressed, and promises to do extra work to spare them. On his next important appearance, he accosts Philip's friends Foster and Goodwin, from whom Philip wishes to borrow money, and by shrewd hints that his young master has a secret store induces them to promise assistance, but Philip spoils the scheme by avowing his poverty. During this interview Simkin acts as adviser to his master and mock-adviser to the friends. Afterwards a pursuivant meets him, and makes him deliver a proclamation, which he perverts throughout. He next appears bringing in a sailor with the news that old Harding's wealth has been lost at sea. Later, when the lovers' fortunes have improved, he acts as comic chorus during Philip's interview with his unnatural brothers and friends, and harps on the folly of their churlish behaviour in the past. At the end, promising to present the lovers with a masque, he brings in the brothers and friends in a state of destitution, and makes humorous comments upon their stories of their misfortunes, until he is checked by Philip. From this broad outline it is clear that if his rôle is not exactly essential, yet he has his part in the action, and that no insignificant or valueless one.

So much, then, for the employment of the clown in the plot. But there are other points to be noticed with regard to the development of this personage as a dramatic character. In the first place, although all stage fools provide some sort of comic relief, the dramatists naturally vary greatly in ability to choose the right moment for the introduction of this relief. In connexion with the Moralities this point need not be discussed, since there comic relief comes in almost automatically throughout, owing to the fact that the Vice is leader of the intrigue as well as merry-maker. In these plays, moreover, comedy is only needed to form a pleasing break in the edifying disquisitions which form so large a part of the Moralities,—not, as a rule, to relieve a distressing situation, since the moral plays almost always end well, and the temporary downfall of the Vice's victims does not often give rise to a situation that can, strictly speaking, be called tragic. From *Everyman*, the Morality which most nearly,

probably, approaches tragedy, the comic element is rigidly excluded. In such Vice plays as *Appius and Virginia*, tragedy is certainly present, but there again the double function of the Vice continually brings in the necessary comic relief.

It is in the regular drama that the question of introducing this relief at the psychological moment becomes important. Here once again Shakespeare is supreme. Nowhere else in the drama do we find such effects produced by the juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic—the tone clashes which Moulton describes—as we find in *Antony and Cleopatra* or *King Lear*. But in the work of Shakespeare's contemporaries we at least find attempts to blend the comic and the tragic with some degree of harmony, and these attempts are by no means wholly unsuccessful. In tragedies proper we do not find many instances of the introduction of the clown, for the greater Elizabethan tragedians make very little use of him, though they frequently introduce comic touches by means of other characters, such as the hangman in *The Spanish Tragedy*. None of the dozen tragedies (apart from Shakespeare's plays and *Dr. Faustus*) in which the fool appears are of the first rank. Many, indeed, are rambling chronicle plays rather than true tragedies. Hence, as might be expected, it is only rarely that we find in them any considerable artistic skill in the introduction of comic relief, and we usually feel grateful that the dramatist has had the grace to leave his tragic fifth act unspoiled by the intrusive presence of the clown. This, indeed, is usually the case. Almost the only clowns to appear in the final catastrophe cease their jesting as the end draws near. Piston in *Soliman and Perseda* bids farewell pathetically to his dead mistress and shares her death; and Roger in *The English Traveller* when his mistress falls stricken with remorse makes his last and his only serious speech in the play—*My sweet mistress!* But usually the clown disappears, jesting still, before the fifth act. His duty is to serve as relief to the minor tragedies which lead up to the final disaster. For this purpose he is introduced in various ways. Sometimes a clown scene is admitted into the middle of a gloomy play, as is the case in *Selimus* (1594), where Bullithrumble the shepherd, who only appears twice, provides a little diversion from the appalling tale of murders of which the play chiefly consists. Sometimes the fool is introduced in the midst of a tragic scene, often with doubtful taste, as in the execution scene in *Sir Thomas More*.[1] Considerable development in this respect is seen in a later play, *Sir Thomas Wyat*

[1] Ed. Dyce, *Shakespeare Society*, p. 35.

(1607), where the clown witnesses Homes's remorse and suicide after betraying his master, remarking, 'So, so, a very good ending: would all false servants might drink of the same'[1]—approbation largely due to his anxiety to appropriate the gold which was the price of the betrayal. The contrast between the detachment and want of feeling in the clown's remarks and the distress of mind shown by Homes is not wanting in effectiveness. Perhaps the most daring attempt in this group of plays to relieve and at the same time enhance the gloom of the tragedy, is found in *Hoffmann*, where Stilt introduces a touch of comedy immediately after the tragic death of Prince Jerome.[2] The Prince, his master, dies asking his father to provide for Stilt, but instead the Duke orders him to be tortured to death. The clown remarks, 'Provide, quoth 'a?—an you call this providing, pray let me provide for myself. Alas my poor father! he'll creep upon crutches into his grave, when he hears that his proper Stilt is cut off by the stumps'—and his last word as he is dragged off to execution is a jest.

Similar to some extent to his part in these tragedies is the part played by the clown in most of the other dramas in which he appears. For though the comedies and romances of which the clown plays chiefly consist always end happily, they often threaten for a time to become tragedy, and it is the clown's office to restore that equilibrium of life which is the essence of comedy whenever that equilibrium is too much disturbed. It may be significant that in several plays, such as *The Old Law*, the fool does not appear until Act III, when serious complications are developing. Shakespeare's contemporaries knew the trick of lowering the tone of a play when the tension is becoming too great; and some of them show an ingenuity and artistic sense in the use of it which, though not comparable with his, are by no means to be despised. In the earlier plays these attempts at comic relief are undoubtedly crude, as in *Damon and Pythias*, where the comic interlude of the duping of Grim the collier by the pages is introduced when the situation of the friends is becoming serious, and a tragedy seems imminent. But the later dramatists, instead of concentrating all their relief in one or two interludes, tend more and more to distribute it throughout the play, as is made possible by their greater skill in interweaving their clowns' rôles with the intrigue. Trying situations are continually relieved by a scene of jesting, or a song, if the clown is musical. Such judicious alternation of serious and comic scenes is seen in *How to choose a Good Wife from a Bad* (1602), where the clowning of Pipkin constantly brings the play back to the

[1] iii. 3. [2] iv. 2.

sphere of comedy. At the gravest moment of all, when Mistress Arthur is supposed to be murdered, Pipkin relieves the situation by his ludicrous manner of bringing the news.[1] This device of conveying bad news by the clown, and thus lessening the strain at painful moments, is found very frequently. Possibly it was suggested by one of the most delicate and dangerous offices of the court fool.

Also suggestive of the influence of the court or domestic fool is another function to be noted in tracing the dramatic development of the stage clown, already mentioned incidentally in the sketch of Simkin's rôle given above—that of comic chorus. As the domestic fool was privileged to indulge in free comments on any event which occurred or any matter which was discussed in his presence, so the stage fool often has in scenes which are not primarily clown scenes the minor but effective part of commentator—a rôle compared by Coleridge with that of the chorus in the ancient classic drama. This function can be developed to much advantage by a skilful dramatist, for apart from the amusement which can be derived from witty comments on the situation, these comments can often be used to strike the key-note of common sense in a scene of confused harmonies, and to put the spectator at the right point of view.

Naturally the rôle of chorus is particularly characteristic of the court and domestic fools of the drama, but it is by no means confined to them. It appears in almost the earliest stage of the written drama, for there are traces of it in the rôles of the ill-disposed servants of the Miracle plays.[2] It is a favourite trick of the Vice, who delights in uttering comic asides during the conversations of his victims or his fellow-vices, usually revealing his true nature or that of his associates in these comments. Particularly noteworthy is the scene in *The Conflict of Conscience* where Hypocrisy listens unseen to the conversation of his confederates Avarice and Tyranny, and makes appropriate remarks throughout, as, for example, when they are discussing the advisability of making friends with a third person:

> *Tyranny.* I judge him needful in our company to be,
> And therefore, for my part, he is welcome to me.
> *Hypocrisy (aside).* Friendship for gain.[3]

In the rôle of the regular stage fool this function is still more prominent, particularly in the case of the servant-clown, who naturally has exceptional opportunities of exercising it. Sometimes the clown's comments are merely intended to be entertaining, as in the case of Taber's remarks on his master's conversation with the Schoolmaster.[4]

[1] iii. 3.
[2] See above, p. 26.
[3] Dodsley, vi, pp. 48-51.
[4] *Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, ii. 2.

When the latter quotes, or tries to quote, Latin—'Quomodo vales, quomodo vales'—Taber exclaims, 'Go with you to the alehouse? I like the motion well.' But often these remarks are very apt, as is Simplicity's comment on the meeting of Fraud, Dissimulation, Simony and Usury—

> Now all the cards in the stock are dealt about,
> The four knaves in a cluster come ruffling out.[1]

Sometimes, too, they have considerable weight. The shrewd hints which Ragan, Esau's servant, conveys to his master, and his bitter comments when Esau sells his birthright, are almost anticipatory of those of Lear's fool. When Esau is excusing himself by pleading the uselessness of his birthright:

'What should I have done with my birthright in this case?'

Ragan retorts aside:

'Kept it still, and you had not been a very ass.'[2]

And occasionally, though never to the same degree as in Shakespeare's plays, the comments of the clowns, by the good sense and good feeling which reveal themselves from beneath their pretended folly, throw into sharp relief the folly of men who should be, and profess to be, wiser. This point is brought out by Malevole, who remarks on the fool Passarello's satirical hits at the follies of his master and others:

> O world most vile, when thy loose vanities,
> Taught by this fool, do make the fool seem wise.

This idea of comparison between the clown and the chief characters appears in a different aspect in another of his dramatic functions—that of parody. Sometimes the burlesque is implied in his rôle. The non-servant clown often appears as a parody of a group of characters—rebels, bandits and the like—and the figure of the servant is frequently a ludicrous imitation of that of his master, a notable example being Trimtram in *A Fair Quarrel*, who gives the keynote to his character when he says, 'Look, what my master does, I use to do the like'. Particularly are the master's foibles caricatured. Thus the character of Nicholas St. Antlings in *The Puritan*, who exclaims in horror at oaths, but asks his fellow-servants to 'make a lie' for him, parodies that of the Puritanical widow. Sometimes the clown is the centre of a sub-plot on the same lines as the main plot—usually a love-affair, as in the case of Corebus in *The Old Wives' Tale*. The servant-clowns in particular often have love-affairs in imitation of their masters. The most elaborate example of a sub-plot parodying

[1] *Three Ladies of London*, Dodsley, vi, p. 258.
[2] *Jacob and Esau*, Dodsley, ii, pp. 18-20.

the main plot is found in *The Old Law*, mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Frequently, the clown intentionally parodies the speech of the serious characters either in matter or in style. Strumbo imitates Albanaet's threats to the Scythians:

> *Alb.* For with this sword, this instrument of death,
> . . . . . .
> Ile separate thy bodie from thy head,
> And set that coward blood of thine abroach.
> *Str.* Nay, with this staffe, great Strumbo's instrument,
> Ile crack thy cockscome, paltry Scithian.[1]

So, too, Mouse parodies his betters:

> *Segasto.* Tremelio fought when many men did yield.
> *Amadine.* So would the shepherd, had he been in field.
> *Mouse.* So would my master, had he not run away.[2]

And it is in this spirit that Touchstone, when Rosalind remarks after a scene between Silvius and Phebe that in witnessing the shepherd's woes she has found her own, says in his turn, 'And I mine', and proceeds to tell the story of his love for Jane Smile.[3]

Such, then, are the lines on which the stage fool developed as a dramatic character. We have seen how the dramatists learned by degrees to weave him more and more closely into the plots of their plays (usually by making him the servant of one of the principal characters), and how great are the dramatic possibilities of the character, once his position in the action is assured. Apart from his chief duty, the providing of comic relief whenever the tension is becoming too severe, he may perform various minor functions. He may act as a link between sub-plot and main-plot; by his soliloquies he may keep the audience informed of the progress of events; by his comments in the part of comic chorus, or by parodying the foibles of the chief characters, he may help to put the spectators at the right point of view—and all this apart from the humorous potentialities of these various functions. A fool in whose rôle all or most of these possibilities have been judiciously developed is clearly no longer a stumbling-block to the orderly progress of a play or an incongruous element in its composition—rather is he a most valuable dramatic asset.

[1] *Locrine*, ii. 5.
[2] *Mucedorus*, Dodsley, vii, p. 224.
[3] *As You Like It*, ii. 4.

CHAPTER III

THE EVOLUTION OF THE FOOL IN CHARACTERIZATION—LINES OF DEVELOPMENT.

In the preceding chapter a piece of contemporary satire on the haphazard introduction of the fool was quoted. Another extract from the same play[1] will show what standard of humour he was expected to attain. Dromo is advising the clown how to entertain his audience:—'Why, if thou canst but drawe thy mouth awrye, laye thy legge over thy staffe, sawe a piece of cheese asunder with thy dagger, lape up drinke on the earth, I warrant thee theile laughe mightilie.' And other references to the 'fine scurvy faces' and the like tricks with which the fools were wont to convulse their audiences confirm the testimony which this quotation bears to the popular taste in humour at the end of the sixteenth century. But though stage tricks of a primitive nature appear to have been of primary importance to the audience, it was not to be expected that dramatists of talent and artistic taste would be content with mere crude buffoonery. As the drama develops, we see increasingly successful attempts to individualize the fool, to replace coarse and stupid sallies by true humour, and thus to transform the character into one of real artistic and literary value. An attempt to trace this evolution in characterization will be made in the two following chapters. First the different lines on which the character developed will be indicated, and then, in order to fill in the picture, a summary of the clown's most striking characteristics will be given.

It was natural that the fool should develop along various lines, in view of the complexity of his origin. For though in practically all the clowns proper we can trace the same elements, the proportion in which these elements are combined varies considerably, and sometimes one so greatly predominates as to produce a distinct type. These minor types are chiefly three—the domestic or court fool, the rustic clown, and the shrewd, jesting servant.

As has already been mentioned, domestic and court fools occur with surprising rarity in the regular drama. In some hundred fool

[1] *Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, ed. Macray, p. 22.

plays (apart from Shakespeare's) examined for the purposes of this study, there are barely a dozen certain examples, though there are a number of other clowns who may possibly belong to this class. The Vice characters who belong to some extent to this type have already been described—Fancy and Folly, Hardy-Dardy, Mery Report, and other less distinct figures. It was pointed out that Fancy and Folly seem to represent the two types of fool found in mediaeval society—natural and artificial. Fools of both these types appear in the regular drama, but the artificial greatly predominate. To this class belongs the first in time, Gelasimus, Herod's fool, in Grimald's Latin play *Archi-propheta* (1547)—a court fool pure and simple, apparently little affected by the other elements which go to compose the later clown. Gelasimus may best be described as 'a bitter fool'. He gibes scornfully at the Pharisees—'What a lot my masters mumble! Mum, mum, ba-ba, be-be. Should I not make a fine Pharisee? But such work wears out the lips.'[1] He utters some sharp home truths to Herodias,[2] and offers cynical advice to John—'If you will listen to me learn to serve the time. He cannot live who cannot be knavish.' Gelasimus, by the cynicism of his remarks, and the moral sense which they sometimes reveal, more nearly approaches Lear's fool than does any other of his class. Passarello in *The Malcontent*, sixty years later, also earns his master's comment, 'A bitter fool!' by his satirical sketches of different people about the court,[3] though he shows greater detachment than does Gelasimus. His remarks are too coarse and cynical to be really humorous, in spite of the shrewdness of his blows and the smartness of his repartee, and he is not an attractive figure, though there is at least one unusual and human touch in the study—his sense of the degradation of his position—'Well, I'll dog my lord, and the word is proper: for when I fawn upon him, he feeds me; when I snap him by the fingers, he spits in my mouth. If a dog's death were not strangling, I had rather be one than a serving-man.'

A lighter type of character is that represented by Ralph Simnell in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589–90). Though he does not appear much, it is clear that he is a mere jester, ready to enter into all his master's frolics; and though he makes some audacious hits, as where he tells the promised bride of the prince of the latter's former love affair,[4] he is Edward's abettor, not his critic. His humour is of the fanciful order, as where he devises numerous schemes

[1] ii. 2. [2] iv. 2. [3] i. 7.

[4] Gayley, *Representative Comedies*, vol. i, p. 490.

for the winning of Margaret, or asks Lacy to buy him 'a thousand thousand million of fine bels', explaining that 'every time that Ned sighs for the Keeper's daughter, Ile tie a bell about him: and so within three or foure daies I will send word to his father Harry, that his sonne and my maister Ned is become Loves morris dance'. A coarser and homelier jester is Will Summers in *When you see me you know me* (1604), and his humour does not reach a high level; but the character deserves favourable mention as being a careful and faithful study of Will, agreeing throughout with Armin's description of him, particularly in regard to his disinterestedness, his kindness to the poor, and his dislike for Wolsey. The popular Will appears again as prologue and comic chorus to *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592), but there is no attempt at characterization.

Of the natural fool we find the earliest dramatic study in Cacurgus of *Misogonus* (*c.* 1560)—an exceedingly interesting character, in that in him we have two character sketches, one of the natural fool and one of the professional jester and mischief-maker. For though in reality he is a schemer, showing a connexion with the Vice, especially the Vice servants, he deludes his old master into believing him an innocent—'a simple thinge . . . who for his simplicitie a fooles cote doth wear',[1] talking rustic dialect, babbling of his 'ganser', and petted by his 'vounder' for the sake of his songs and tales, and the scraps of information which he sometimes brings him, in return for 'some dingdonges to hang at my sleife'.[2] Cacurgus does not often appear as the natural, however, and with the exception of Lamia, the solitary female fool in the English drama, we find no more innocents until the end of the century. Patch, Wolsey's fool,[3] is a slight sketch of the stupid fool, making few jests, and quite overshadowed by Will Summers, who makes him the victim of a practical joke; but in a play a few years earlier, *Patient Grissell*.[4] we find what is probably the most delightful study of the domestic fool outside the work of Shakespeare, in Babulo, the retainer of Grissell and her father. This character (which does not appear in other versions of the story) is undoubtedly excellently drawn, and the impression which it leaves on the mind is exceedingly pleasant. Babulo's name gives the key to his character; he is a babbler, but one of the most charming of babblers. He must be classed with the natural fools, since he says that he was 'born an innocent', but he often exhibits

[1] *Misogonus*, ed. Brandl, in *Quellen des weltlichen Dramas*, p. 427.

[2] Ibid., p. 443.

[3] *When you see me you know me.*

[4] By Chettle, Dekker and Haughton (1599).

considerable shrewdness and good sense, both in his repartees and in his moralizings on life. And of good-feeling he is full, though he usually tries to hide it under jests and pretended anxiety for his own welfare. He follows uncomplainingly the fortunes of his master and mistress, with a fidelity worthy of Touchstone, encouraging them with his cheerful prattle; and though at first he appears fonder of chatter than of work, when troubles come he does his best to be useful. He appears perhaps in his most delightful aspect with Grissell's children, giving up his own pillow to them, and dandling them in his arms and soothing them with 'Hush, hush, hush, hush! and I dance mine own child, and I dance mine own child!'[1] Another no less admirable trait appears in his indignant protests against the Marquis's treatment of Grissell,[2] and the blow which he gave him in the early days of his courtship for trying to kiss her against her will. Whether Babulo is indebted to Touchstone or not is uncertain, but at least there is no slavish imitation, and he may rank as a worthy companion, though not as an equal, of Shakespeare's fools.

Among the rustic clowns again, as has already been indicated, at least two types can be distinguished—the mere booby and the more pretentious clown. On the whole it may be said that the earlier and cruder rustics belong to the former class, while the later ones have developed into something more than boors. The rustics of the Moralities and other Vice plays, mentioned in a previous chapter, are chiefly stupid, and to their tradition belong the first examples of the rustic class in the regular drama, most of whom make very brief appearances and have no claims to individuality. The clown of this type who makes the longest stay on the stage is John Adroynes, in the Second Part of *Promos and Cassandra* (1578). On his first appearance he is duped by two 'promoters' and Phallax, Promos's man, who frighten him into giving up all his money by threatening to accuse him of kissing his father's maid.[3] Later, while seeking his mare, he comes upon Andrugio in hiding, and a scene of cross-purposes (not, however, very amusing) ensues, when Andrugio tries to penetrate the clown's denseness in order to obtain news from him.[4] Fools of Adroynes' type appear again during the decay of the drama in the Boobies and Simpletons of the 'drolls'.[5]

Characters of this class are seldom very diverting, for though mere

[1] Ed. Varnhagen, *Erlanger Beiträge, &c.* (1893), p. 53–5.
[2] Ibid., p. 74.
[3] Part II, iii. 2.
[4] Part II, iv. 2.
[5] Kirkman, *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport.*

stupidity may be funny it is never truly humorous. But with the clowns of the second class we find considerable development in subtlety of characterization, and at least one example of a really humorous character. The germ from which this second type developed is seen in a clown who on the whole belongs to the first class—Grim the collier, of *Damon and Pythias* (1564–5). For though Grim is really stupid enough, he thinks himself astute;[1] and a mistaken idea of his importance and wisdom is the most striking and most humorous characteristic of the later clown. More definitely a member of this class is Poppey, the clownish burgher of *The Wounds of Civil War* (*c.* 1587), who gives condescending advice to his admiring neighbour Curtall,[2] but the sketch of Poppey is brief and slight. The first rustic with a distinct individuality is Bullithrumble, the grandiloquent shepherd of *Selimus* (1594).[3] He first appears running away from his wife, of whom he is terribly afraid, and when Corcut and his page approach him and beg for food he is again alarmed. But directly he discovers that they are only 'poor hunger-starved men', he recovers himself, and waxes pompous and condescending—'Oh, these are as a man should say beggars: Now will I be as stately to them as if I were master Pigwiggin our constable: well, sirs, come before me, tell me, if I should entertain you, would you not steal?' Eventually he concedes, 'Well, if you will keep my sheep truly and honestly, keeping your hands from lying and slandering, and your tongues from picking and stealing, you shall be master Bullithrumble's servitors'. He prides himself greatly on his fine language. Thus when he refers to 'a society of puddings' he remarks, 'Did you mark that well-used metaphor? Another would have said a company of puddings: if you dwell with me long, sirs, I shall make you as eloquent as our parson himself.' His amusing grandiloquence, like that of Dogberry, is made still more ludicrous by the perversions of words and other absurdities with which it is interlarded; and the character as a whole, though not very fully developed, is decidedly diverting.

But a more carefully characterized figure than Bullithrumble, and the most notable of his class, outside Shakespeare's plays, is Turnop in Munday's play of the following year, *John a Kent and John a Cumber* (already mentioned with regard to his dramatic importance), who may best be described as an inferior but by no means contemptible Bottom. The likeness appears most vividly in the first scene,[4] where

[1] Farmer, *Dramatic Writings of Edwards, Norton and Sackville*, pp. 53–65.
[2] Dodsley, vol. vii, pp. 189–92.
[3] Grosart, *Temple Dramatists*, pp. 70–4.
[4] Ed. Collier, *Shakespeare Society*, 1851, p. 15, &c.

the troop of rustics are choosing a spokesman to deliver their address of welcome to Pembroke and Morton. When, after some disputing between Turnop and Hugh the Sexton, Tom Tabrer decides in favour of the former, he being 'my lordes man, his hogheard, his familiaritie servaunt', Turnop receives the honour with much dignity as his due—'Well, for your wisdomes in chusing me, I rest quoniam dygnitatis vestrum primarion, as the Poet Pediculus sayth; and the next vestrie bound to deferre you to severall locall places.' He duly marshals the procession and delivers the oration, of which the first quatrain is a fair sample:

> Lyke to the Cedar in the loftie sea,
> Or milke white mast upon the humble mount,
> So, hearing that your honors came this way,
> Of our rare wittes we came to give account.

At the end of this address, which reminds one strongly of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, Turnop coolly remarks that he has corrected the last two lines, 'by the error of the Authour overslipped'. Throughout the play Turnop preserves the same superior and condescending demeanour. The humblest questioning of his judgement is met with some such reply as this—'Goodman Spurling, though you be purblind, and thereby are favoured for the grosse errours committed in your vocation, yet, I pray ye, commit yourselfe to your musique: as for the song, let it passe upon my prerogastride.' And his friends look up to him as much as Bottom's fellows admire him. Tom Tabrer quells a murmur with, 'Nay, either let it be as Mr. Turnop will have; or, by my troth, faire and softly, I will go no further. Either let us have credit or no credit.' Turnop's speech, like Bullithrumble's, is an absurd mixture of grandiloquent phrases and blunders. One point may be mentioned as particularly reminiscent of Bottom—his love of repeating a word with slight variations, as in the remark, 'Chance persuadeth you to remit, or submit, or admit yourselfe to the crye of your brethren.' But, as in the case of Babulo, if, as seems likely,[1] Turnop was influenced by Shakespeare, he is no mere imitation of the greater dramatist's creation, and can afford to stand on his own merits.

Turnop represents the most numerous class of rustic clowns. There is one other type of rustic—the blunt and ignorant but well-meaning and shrewd countryman, best represented by Hobs, the Tanner of Tamworth, in *Edward IV*.[2] But Hobs and his kind, though still amusing, stand almost entirely outside the sphere of clowns, since

[1] On the date see above, p. 45, note.

[2] Part I, iii. 1, 2, iv. 4, v. 5.

they lack the folly, real or assumed, which is of the essence of clownage.

This same deficiency in folly separates another class of characters from the normal type of clown—shrewd jesting servants who show few signs of stupidity, either real or pretended. Some of these personages are merely jesters, impudent to their masters and to others, and thus carrying on the tradition of the insolent servants of the religious plays. To this class belongs Ragan, Esau's sharp-tongued servant in the play of *Jacob and Esau* (1557–8), who, though he indulges in some clowning, is by no means a fool. Ragan stands at the beginning of the Elizabethan period. With him may be compared a personage dating from the end of that period—Soto, 'a merry fellow', in Middleton's *Spanish Gipsy* (1623). Though he is once referred to as a fool, Fernando's description, 'a fine knave', fits him better. He jests throughout the play, both openly and aside, in a style very different from Ragan's crude railing. He is quite aware of his master's stupidity (though he tries to keep him out of trouble, and help him to win Constanza), and makes rude asides on his master's verses as he presents them—'Botcherly poetry, botcherly!'[1] It may be noted that he is given the part of the comic servant in the play which the gipsies extemporize from Fernando's plot. In such characters as Soto's the fool element is weak, and the transition is easy to such personages as Lollio in *The Changeling* (1623), or, earlier, Lyly's jesting pages, where that element is wanting altogether.

In another type of comic servant we find the element of self-seeking, of which there is often a suggestion in the clown, strongly developed, and with it a tendency to intrigue. The protagonists of this type are the Vice servants Subtle-Shift and Conditious, already described. One of the best examples in the regular drama is Nimble, Trissillian's servant in *Thomas of Woodstock*, whose one idea is his own gain. He encourages his master in his villainy in the hope that he will share in the profits which it brings him; he enters thoroughly into the spirit of the commission given to him to spy out and arrest disaffected persons; and finally, when Trissillian has to flee for his life, Nimble, under pretence of saving him, betrays him to save himself. In the rôle of Nimble some clown qualities are still found, such as his misquotations of law-Latin, and his grandiloquent, fantastic speech, of which the following is a sample: 'always hoping of your wonted favour that when I have past the London Bridge of affliction I may arrive with you at the Westminster Hall of promotion.' But in characters such as some of Lyly's servants and those of many later

[1] ii. 1.

plays, the self-seeking, intriguing element is so developed as to swamp the fool element entirely, and the resulting figures are therefore no longer clowns. As has already been mentioned in connexion with the question of Italian influence, it was such characters as these that replaced the clownish servant in the later drama.

So much for the minor types of stage fool. What then was the chief type of clown, and in what way was he differentiated from the other varieties? To take the second question first,—in the commonest type of clown all three minor varieties are usually so blended that no one of them predominates in any marked degree, though naturally there is no sharp line of demarcation between the chief and the minor classes, and there are a number of characters whom it is difficult to classify. If the clown and the domestic or court fool be compared, it will be seen that, on the whole, the clown is usually of a coarser and more ignorant type, lacking the polish which the professional fool usually exhibits in some degree. He is stupider too, than the artificial fool, and yet he cannot be classed with the naturals, since he often shows a shrewdness quite unlike the occasional inspired flashes of the innocent. Moreover, there are a considerable number of independent clowns, and even in the case of some who are nominally retainers, there is only very imperfect development of the relations between fool and master, so important a feature in the character of the domestic fool. The coarser and more stupid qualities of the clown seem to be due to the influence of the rustic—but on the other hand the true clown is by no means as ignorant or stupid as the rustic, and shows far more knowledge of the world and its ways. It may be remarked, too, that his tastes, like Touchstone's, are usually distinctly urban. Finally, the clown is differentiated from the third minor type, not only by some of the qualities mentioned with regard to the domestic fool, but also by the almost entire absence of the intriguing tendency which characterizes that class of servants. Unlike the professional fool, he usually (when a servant) has some nominal duty to perform, but with him that duty takes only a secondary place.

These remarks may help to explain what the normal clown was not. To show what he actually was is the purpose of the following account of his development and characteristics.

Like the domestic and rustic fools of the drama, the regular clown is to some extent foreshadowed in the Moralities, though the clown function of the Vice often becomes swamped by his other function. In the earlier Vice figures (apart from Skelton's court fools) it is difficult to trace any attempt at characterization as humorous figures. Their comic qualities are always of the same primitive kind—horse-

play (chiefly consisting of blows), violent abuse, oaths, and coarse jests, often frankly indecent. But before the end of the Morality period, there is notable development in various directions. In the first place, the Vice, more than any other character in the Moralities, tends at an early date to become concrete. Even in *Mankind* we find in the four Vices concrete characters, who do much to atone for their low standard of humour by their racy and picturesque manner of speech, which, as Galey points out, is 'a fine advance in the reproduction of the vulgar'. By the end of the period the transformation from abstract to concrete is complete in all but the names. Subtle-Shift[1] is merely an intriguing servant, and Idleness in *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*, already mentioned, is a clown with a strong rustic tincture.

Idleness shows too that the Vice has developed in another way: he has become more stupid. The majority of Vices are clever intriguers, playing on others' credulity or stupidity, but in time they begin to exhibit signs of stupidity themselves. The first trace of this change is seen in those plays where one of the Vices is rather less astute than the others. Thus in *Respublica* (1553), when Avarice renames the minor Vices and himself, in order to deceive Respublica, Adulation cannot grasp the new names, and there is a scene of fooling when Avarice tries to fix them in his memory.[2] Adulation also forgets his part in conversation with Respublica, and has to try to cover up his blunders[3]—an early example of those slips of the tongue which became favourite comic devices with the later Vices, and from them were handed down to the clowns. Stupidity such as Adulation's is rare in the Vice, but nevertheless hints of it do occasionally appear, and in Idleness, the last of the Vices, we find a character who, though he sometimes deludes others, is as frequently a dupe himself. Some of his misadventures are amusing, as is the scene when Snatch and Catch bind and muffle him and leave him 'a-mumming'.[4]

Another step in the development of the Vice as a humorous character was to make him direct his fun against himself or his disreputable confederates. Jokes of this nature are much superior in artistic effect to those levelled against blameless persons, secure in the sense of superiority and certain of ultimate triumph. Thus in *King Darius* (1565), Iniquity's jests at the expense of Equity and Charity compare unfavourably with his gibes at his associates. He calls the latter 'drunken knaves', and when they inquire what he said, replies:

[1] *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes.*
[2] Ed. Magnus, *E. E. T. S.*, p. 14.
[3] Ibid., p. 19.
[4] Farmer, *Five Anonymous Plays*, pp. 274–5.

I sayed ye were two honest men, by my faye.
But surely, I did not so thynke,
No, that I dyd not, I sweare by this drynke.

These remarks reach no high standard of wit, but they mark an advance both artistically and satirically. As Gayley remarks, 'Comedy has learned a lesson of social importance when she turns her weapons, at last, against those who are deservedly objects of derision or contempt'. Sometimes we find the Vice acting as comic and satiric chorus to the conversation of his associates, as in the case of Hypocrisy mentioned in the last chapter. The later Vices, who, as a rule, have no confederates, frequently direct their uncomplimentary pleasantries against the devil. Thus Nichol Newfangle remarks on seeing him:

Sancte benedicite, whom have we here?
Tom Tumbler, or else some dancing bear?

objects to doing reverence to him; perverts the polite address which Lucifer dictates to him; and purposely misunderstands his directions before he will deign to follow them.[1] Nichol, too, since he is one of the few Vices who are definitely stated to ride off with the devil at the end, probably provided the audience with one of those scenes of clownery which are frequently described in contemporary references such as the following—'It was a pretty part in the old Church-Plays, when the nimble Vice would skip up nimbly like a Jackanapes into the devil's neck, and ride the devil a course, and belabour him with his wooden dagger, till he made him roar, whereat the people would laugh to see the devil so vice-haunted.'[2]

Nichol Newfangle is indeed one of the most distinctly individual comic characters among the Vices. Though, acting under the devil's instructions, he is the chief agent in bringing various sets of personages to grief, the ethical significance of his character is slight, and never swamps the comic element. Nichol's chief business is to amuse, and that he is quite aware of that fact is evident from the moment when he first enters with a greeting to the audience almost suggestive of the familiar 'Here we are again!' of the modern pantomime clown. Throughout the play he jests with the spectators and rallies them with the confidence of a popular comedian. For his cool rascality he has been not unjustly compared with Autolycus, and once at least he shows a distinct resemblance to that personage—when he enters with 'a bag, a staff, a bottle, and two halters, going about the place,

[1] *Like will to Like*, Dodsley, iii, pp. 309–16.
[2] Harsnett, *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603).

showing it unto the audience', and singing, 'Trim merchandise, trim, trim'.

The Vice was indeed becoming more and more definitely a professional comedian. The conversations with the audience which are so marked a characteristic of Nichol occur very frequently in the rôles of the later Vices, and comic devices of various kinds appear in increasing numbers. Besides the blunders mentioned above, pretended misunderstandings and intentional perversions are frequent, and purely comic scenes with little or no relation to the moral of the play are more often introduced than formerly. In the Vice tragedies the Vice sometimes has a scene of buffoonery with rustics on whom he plays tricks, though at least once he is punished—and that by a woman.[1] A comic touch of another kind occurs in the same play, *Cambyses* (1569–70), where Ambidexter enters 'with an old cap case on his head, an old pail about his hips for harness, a scummer and a pot-lid by his side, and a rake on his shoulder' and declares that he is on his way to meet a remarkable series of foes:

Stand away, stand away for the passion of God;
Harnessed I am, prepared to the field:
I would have been contented at home to have bod,
But I am sent forth my spear and shield.
I am appointed to fight against a snail,
And Wilkin Wren the ancient shall bear;
I doubt not but against him to prevail,
To be a man my deeds shall declare.[2]

Inclination in *The Triall of Treasure* (1567) also provides a good deal of clowning, particularly when, being bridled by the virtues, he plays the horse.[3] These comic devices sound crude, but doubtless they were amusing enough on the stage. Idleness (perhaps the Vice who is most definitely a clown, his ethical significance taking a decidedly subordinate place), creates a more subtly humorous situation in the scene where he dupes Search. The latter has been sent to arrest him, and sets him to make a proclamation demanding information concerning himself, all of which he of course perverts.[4]

Little has been said in this account of the comic value of the actual speeches of the Vice, for the reason that they seldom reach a very high level in this respect. Of true wit or humour we find very little in the Moralities. But enough has been said to show that by the end of his career the Vice had developed into a professional comedian

[1] Dodsley, iv, pp. 222–4.
[2] Ibid., p. 176.
[3] Ibid., iii, pp. 278–9, 297.
[4] Farmer, *Five Anonymous Plays*, pp. 282–4.

of no mean ability, and the clown of later years found in his tricks a comic heritage of no small worth.

For some years—roughly speaking, from about 1580 to 1590—Vice and clown overlapped, and though it is absurd to regard the latter as being directly derived from the former, it was inevitable that there should be considerable interaction. To this period belongs a transitional figure of great interest—Simplicity of *Three Ladies of London* (1584) and its sequel (1590). Though nominally an abstraction, he is in reality a purely concrete figure; and he is no Vice but a clown, the former's intriguing function being given to a group of characters with no pretensions to humour, and Simplicity's office being amusement only. His character is drawn with a care and an ingenuity which are remarkable considering his early date, and which are much superior to anything in any other clown play before Greene's. But it must be remembered that the author, Wilson, was himself a noted actor of clowns' parts, and hence had experience in the devising of comic tricks. Like all true clowns, Simplicity is a ludicrous mixture of shrewdness and stupidity. He soon detects Fraud and his associates, describes them aptly and vividly, and makes smart comments on their remarks and actions. His description of Fraud's 'arms' which he saw 'hang out of a stable-door' deserves quotation:

> Marry, there was never a scutcheon, but there was two trees rampant,
> And then over them lay a sour tree passant,
> With a man like you in a green field pendant,
> Having a hempen halter about his neck, with a knot under the left ear, because you are a younger brother
> Then, sir, there stands on each side, holding up the cres',
> A worthy ostler's hand in a dish of grease.
> Besides all this, on the helmet stands the hangman's hand,
> Ready to turn the ladder, whereon your picture did stand:
> Then under the helmet hung cables like chains, and for what they are I cannot devise,
> Except it might be to make you hang fast, that the crows might pick out your eyes.

But on the other hand, Fraud in disguise easily dupes him into wasting his money on worthless merchandise.[1] Moreover, like other clowns, he thinks himself far shrewder and wiser than he is. He patronizes the lord's pages, and cannot see that they are chaffing him when they pretend to admire him. Thus when Will explains that they are laughing 'Because your wit was so great in expounding your meaning', Simplicity remarks complacently, 'Ye may see it is

[1] Dodsley, vi, pp. 438–40.

a good thing to have wit'. Like most of his successors he devotes a great deal of thought to the subject of food and drink, of which he continually babbles, and he is absurdly afraid of his wife and anxious to conciliate her. His attempt to punish Fraud must have been a ludicrous piece of clowning. He is allowed to run at him blindfolded with a lighted torch, but being turned round first he loses his bearings, and burns a post instead, the ashes of which are shown him as being Fraud's, when he inquires in great excitement, 'Have I heated his lips? Have I warm'd his nose, and scorched his face?'[1] As a matter of fact, Simplicity is a far better developed character than any of the earliest clowns distinctly so called, and the play itself, though allegorical, has too much vitality to form an inappropriate setting.

But Simplicity's contemporaries are not worthy companions for him. With the beginning of the regular drama the development of the merry-maker as a humorous character suffers a relapse, similar to, and no doubt partly involved in, that relapse noticed in his development as a dramatic figure. The more closely a clown is connected with the action of a play, the more extensive are his opportunities for humour, particularly the subtler kinds of humour; so to some extent the development of the fool as a humorous character follows his dramatic development. It is not surprising, therefore, that Greene's clowns are the first to show any considerable merit in characterization. The earlier sketches are usually very crude. That of Trotter[2] is perhaps one of the best of them, though the rôle is a small one. The workmanship of the play is poor, but the scene of Trotter's ridiculous and presumptuous wooing of Em is quite amusing in its way, as when he breaks into verse:

> Ah, mark the device—
> For thee, my love, full sick I was, in hazard of my life,
> Thy promise was to make me whole, and for to be my wife.
> Let me enjoy my love, my dear,
> And thou possess thy Trotter here.[3]

But of such a character as Derrick in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (written before 1588), Collier's remark is just—'That Tarlton was able to make anything out of such unpromising materials affords strong evidence of the original resources of that extraordinary performer.'

Miles in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, however, who appeared shortly after Derrick, is a really humorous clown. He is a hopeless

[1] p. 501. [2] *Fair Em.*
[3] Simpson, *School of Shakespeare*, vol. ii, pp. 422–3.

dunce in spite of all his master's efforts to instruct him, but the scraps of Latin and other learning which he has picked up make his speeches the more amusing, as when he remarks in bringing in books, 'Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare libros in unum', or when, as often, he breaks into macaronic verse. Though a stupid blunderer, Miles has a good deal of wit. When Burden is depreciating Bacon's powers, Miles, who has a wholesome fear of his master, remarks of Burden, 'Marie, sir, he doth but fulfil . . . the fable of the Fox and the Grapes: that which is above us pertains nothing to us.' He shows his quickness of repartee when he replies to Bacon's challenge to prove 'ego' a substantive, 'Why, sir, let him prove himselfe and a will: 'I' can be heard, felt, and understood.' His amusing monologue while he keeps watch over 'Goodman Head',[1] is anticipatory of those of Shakespeare's clowns, while on the other hand his contented departure to hell with the devil at the end links him with the Vices of the past.

The decade which elapsed between the appearance of Miles and that of his brother-clown Slipper was a period of development in various directions. We find no personage showing an all-round advance in characterization (none, indeed, equal to Miles), and clowns of Derrick's type still appear,[2] but the improvement which many clowns show in different respects points to an increasing care in characterization. Piston in *Soliman and Perseda* (1592) provides no striking instance of wit, but his debate with himself when he is entrusted with the carcanet,[3] though scarcely humorous, shows the groundwork on which was afterwards built the immortal argument between the fiend and Launcelot Gobbo's conscience. Suggestive of later clowns, too, is his teasing of the braggart knight Basilisco.[4] His shrewd hints to his master form a link between him and the sharp-witted servants of Ragan's type, but the method which he employs is not Ragan's but that of the domestic fool, for he introduces his suggestion of false dice with the tentative remark, 'I, but heare you, Maister, was not he a foole that went to shoote, and left his arrows behinde him?'[5]

Advance in other directions is seen in Strumbo of *Locrine* (1594), a character of considerable vitality, showing the presence of various elements which had important developments later. In the first place, he anticipates some characteristics of Falstaff, for although he claims

[1] Gayley, *Representative Comedies*, vol. i, pp. 485–6.
[2] e.g. Tom Miller in *Life and Death of Jack Straw* (1593).
[3] *Soliman and Perseda*, ii. 1. [4] Ibid., i. 4.
[5] Ibid., ii. 1.

to possess great courage, when the battle begins he exclaims, 'O, horrible, terrible!' and hastens to save himself by shamming death.[1] Also, his style of speech shows one mode which was to become popular with the clown—absurdly grandiloquent language, in which Strumbo delights, particularly when wooing, albeit his sweetheart is quite unable to understand it.[2] One of his fine speeches is a parody of Euphuism—'I, maisters, I, you may laugh, but I must weepe: you may joy, but I must sorrow, sheading salt tears from the watrie fountains of my moste daintie faire eies, along my comely and smooth cheeks, in as great plentie as the water runneth from the bucking-tubbes, or red wine out of the hogs heads.' But while in grandiloquence of speech Strumbo may be held to anticipate such characters as the bombastic Don Armado, his blunders, on the other hand, link him with the Bottom class.

Within a year Bottom himself appeared, to be followed shortly by several more of Shakespeare's early clowns, so that from this time we may expect to find traces of Shakespeare's influence. One of the first of these signs is probably the change which Lyly's comic servants undergo. In most of his plays they are rather jesters than clowns, but Gunophilus, Pandora's servant,[3] and the unfortunate victim of all the changes in her disposition, is of a more clownish type. As Bond has noted, the proportion of true humour to mere superficial wit is greater in the case of Gunophilus than in that of his predecessors. Particularly in his 'rueful appreciation of his own mishaps' he seems to show the influence of the Shakespearian clown.

There is no definite trace of Shakespeare's influence in Slipper, but he is a distinctly different type from Miles, for though foolish enough to let his money be stolen, he is by no means as stupid as Miles, and his remarks are decidedly wittier and more amusing. On the whole, he is a subtler and more fanciful character. The difference between the two may be compared with the difference between their ends, for while Miles rides off on the devil's back to be a tapster in hell, Slipper is carried away by Oberon and his 'antiques'. Roundabout and fantastic speech is popular with him—also riddling answers, as when, asked where his master is, he replies, 'Neither above ground nor under ground, drawing out red into white, swallowing downe without chawing that was never made without treading', by which, as he eventually explains, he means that his master is 'in his seller, drinking a cup of neate and briske claret in a bowle of silver.' A delightful example of his allusive method of speaking is the way in

[1] *Locrine*, ii. 6. [2] Ibid., i. 3.
[3] *The Woman in the Moone* (1597).

which he gets food and drink from the countess by hints—'Oh what a happie gentlewoman bee you trulie! the world reports this of you, Mistresse, that a man can no sooner come to your house but the Butler comes with a blacke Jack and sayes, 'Welcome, friend, heares a cup of the best for you.'' [1] He is 'swift and sententious' and ready with his answers, as when he proves that, being a horse-keeper, he is a gentleman, since 'they that do good service in the Commonweale are gentlemen; but such as rub horses do good service in the Commonweale; Ergo, tarbox, Master Courtier, a Horse-keeper is a Gentleman'. As these remarks suggest, he is important and self-satisfied, especially when ordering his new clothes.[2] Of moral sense, like most clowns, he is quite destitute. 'Will I, sir?', he replies eagerly, when offered a bribe to steal his master's letters; 'Why, were it to rob my father, hang my mother, or any such like trifles, I am at your commaundement, sir. What will you give me, sir?'

But one does not quarrel with a clown for lack of moral sense, unless the dramatist fails to make this want amusing, as is the case in *The Old Law*, which appeared a year or two after *James IV*. A comic dramatist of greater genius than Middleton could have drawn much entertaining matter from Gnotho's attempt to dispose of his old wife in order to marry a new one, but on the whole this clown is not sufficiently humorous to be anything but a distinctly unpleasant character. He is coarse and shameless, and much of his jesting is either too foolish or too grim to be funny. An example of the latter variety is his explanation of the situation of his two wives to the duke 'As the destiny of the day falls out, my lord, one goes to wedding, another goes to hanging; and your grace, in the due consideration, shall find 'em much alike; the one hath the ring upon her finger, the other a halter about her neck. "I take thee, Beatrice," says the bridegroom; "I take thee, Agatha," says the hangman; and both say together, to have and to hold, till death do part us.' He is perhaps most amusing where he moralizes, as at the end, where he poses as a much injured man—'Your grace had been more kind to your young subjects—heaven bless and mend your laws, that they do not gull your poor countrymen in this fashion: but I am not the first, by forty, that has been undone by the law. 'Tis but a folly to stand upon terms.'

Gnotho has been described partly as a warning that Slipper must not be taken as representative of the clown at the end of the sixteenth century. But from about this time we notice a decided general

[1] *James IV*, ii. 1. [2] Ibid., iv. 3.

improvement in characterization, accompanying and probably partly consequent on that improvement in dramatic treatment described in the last chapter, and like that doubtless partly due to the influence of Shakespeare. In all probability his clowns not only inspired other dramatists but also did something to cultivate the public taste in clownage. In the first decade of the seventeenth century, though a few crudely-sketched characters still appear,[1] the evolution of clowns as a class in characterization, as in other respects, reaches its highest pitch; and from this point it is impossible to trace chronological development further. All that can be done is to point out some varieties of the mature clown. The non-servant clowns, being the smaller class, may be taken first.

A character somewhat reminiscent of Gnotho, but decidedly more amusing, is Scumbroth, the convent cook in Dekker's play, *If this be not a Good Play, the Devil is in it* (1612). Like Gnotho, he is something of a rogue, but, unlike that of Gnotho and such characters as the cowardly, greedy clown of *The Four Prentices of London* (*c.* 1600), Scumbroth's roguery is on the whole rather diverting than offensive. Once or twice he appears in a merely unamiable light, as when, after receiving half the gold found by the Sub-Prior on the condition that he gives the remainder to the poor, he remarks aside, 'Foole: Ile give the blinde a dog to lead 'em, the lame shall to the whipping-post, the sick shall dye in a cage, and the hungry leap at a crust; I feede roagues, the pox shall'. But as a rule his foibles are amusing, as is his love of good cheer, which makes him an ardent ally of the demon Shacklesoul when the latter sets to work to corrupt the convent.[2] His greed emboldens him to converse coolly and impudently with the Golden Head when it appears, after the manner of Miles, as when he retorts to the remark 'That gold is none of thine', 'But all the craft in that great head of yours cannot get it out of my fingers.' Most amusing of all is the scene where, crouching in the tree which he has climbed in search of more gain, he listens in alarm to the devils' conference and makes half scared, half satirical remarks thereon, such as (when they embrace) 'Sure these are no Christian Divels, they so love one another.' The situation grows ludicrous when to his horror he discovers that his own fate is the subject of their conversation.[3]

A more attractive type of character is that represented by Barnabe Bunch 'the Botcher' in *The Weakest goeth to the Wall* (1600).

[1] e.g. Clown in *If you know not me you know Nobody*.
[2] Dekker's *Works*, ed. Bullen, vol. iii, p. 283.
[3] Ibid., pp. 326–9.

Like most clowns, he seems to have a fairly sharp eye on the main chance, for he asks Lodowick to send back as many diseases as possible from France so that he may make a good thing of grave-digging, but he is never grasping or greedy. 'Why, what do ye think of me?' he asks when offered a reward, 'a horseleech to suck ye?' He shares the exile of Lodowick and his family with unselfish devotion, and once shows remarkable delicacy—when he takes the Fleming aside while Lodowick says farewell to his wife.[1] Barnabe is always contented and good-tempered. He first appears singing at his work, his songs being scraps of ballads apparently suggested to his mind by passing events.[2] There is a ludicrous scene of misunderstanding between him and the Fleming,[3] and his wistful panegyric on English ale is also amusing—'This France I confesse is a goodly Countrey, but it breeds no Ale hearbes, good water thats drinke for a horse, and de vine blanket, and de vine Coverlet, dat is vine Claret for great outrich cobs. Well fare England, where the poore may have a pot of Ale for a penney, fresh Ale, firme Ale, nappie Ale, nippitate Ale, irregular, secular Ale, couragious, contagious Ale, alcumisticall Ale'.

Still more jovial than Barnabe, and more of a clown, is Will Cricket, the appropriately-named merry-maker of *Wily Beguiled* (1606), who is described as 'the merriest wooer in all womanshire'. He constantly acts as jester, and makes some smart answers and comments when in company with the principal characters, whose natures and relations he appears to understand fairly well. But as a lover he is, though successful, utterly ludicrous, as when he analyses his emotions in absurd terms or describes his lady's charms in language worthy of Pyramus:

> Then say I, sweet honey, honey, sugar-candy Peg,
> Whose face more fair than Brock my father's cow;
> Whose eyes do shine
> Like bacon-rine;
> Whose lips are blue,
> Of azure hue;
> Whose crooked nose down to her chin doth bow.[4]

When we turn to the servant-clowns we find such a bewildering number that it is difficult to make a selection. But in the first place one may be chosen to show what stage had been reached in the development of this type at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and thus about the middle of Shakespeare's career. For this purpose

[1] Malone Society Reprints, Sc. vii. [2] Ibid., Sc. ii. [3] Sc. iv.
[4] Dodsley, ix, p. 244.

Pipkin, the servant of Young Arthur and his wife in *How to choose a good Wife from a Bad* (1602), may be selected. He is one of the garrulous, good-for-nothing clowns who are more mischievous than helpful, but nevertheless have many attractive and even lovable qualities. It takes a considerable time to induce Pipkin to cease his chatter and start on an errand; and when he is at home the maid complains that no one can 'keep his fingers from the roast', and also that he is 'such a sloven:

> That nothing will sit handsome about him;
> He had a pound of soap to scour his face,
> And yet his brow looks like the chimney stock.'

As a scholar, too, he is hopeless, judging from the amusing scene at Master Aminadab's school (where, notwithstanding his late arrival and his lamentable ignorance of Latin, he manages to avoid punishment for once),[1] and also from his own account of his scholastic career—'Let me see, what age am I? some four-and-twenty; and how have I profited? I was five years learning to criss cross from great A, and five years longer coming to F, . . . And so forth: so that I am become the greatest scholar in the school, for I am bigger than two or three of them.[2]' His employment of his scraps of learning[3] reminds us of another unsatisfactory scholar, Miles. But though he is incapable of learning, he has wit enough to grasp the state of affairs between his master and mistress. Moreover, he shows good feeling as well as good sense, and seems really fond of his master and mistress. His lamentations when Mistress Arthur is supposed to be dead are apparently sincere though extravagant,[4] and his attachment to Arthur may be inferred from the new wife's order:

> Go, turn him out of doors;
> None that loves Arthur shall have house-room here.

Fleay's assignation of this play to Heywood is probably incorrect, but it cannot be denied that Pipkin, though his rôle is smaller than that of Heywood's best clowns, shows distinct affinities to them.

Some remarks on Heywood's clowns will fittingly conclude this study of the evolution of the fool in characterization; for these clowns cover practically the whole of the remainder of the fool's career, give a good idea of the variety in artistic merit shown by the fool even at this period, and include probably the best-developed fools of the whole drama apart from Shakespeare's. In the extant works of this most prolific writer at least fifteen clowns appear, ranging over a period of some forty years—roughly, from about 1594 to 1634.

[1] ii. 1. [2] iii. 1. [3] v. 1. [4] iii. 3.

As might be expected, they are of very unequal merit in characterization as well as in dramatic importance. One or two are of extreme crudeness, notably the clown of 'If you know not me'. Those of the plays on classical subjects,[1] are, as has already been mentioned, spoilt by the extreme unsuitability of their settings, if not by clumsy or careless workmanship. Thus Pompey is not only an exceedingly coarse and unpleasant character, but is totally out of place in such a story as that of Lucrece. Other clowns again, such as the one in *The Royal King and the Loyal Subject*, have too little humour or wit to be anything but dull and tedious.

But Heywood is no more faulty in these respects than many of his contemporaries, among whose clowns parallels to the imperfect characters just mentioned are easily found. And on the other hand four of his clowns stand out conspicuously not only among his own merry-makers but also among those of the whole period, and may be taken as representative in characterization as in other respects of the highest development of the clown along ordinary lines.[2] These four, Roger, Fiddle, Clem, and Simkin show distinctly individual characteristics. Roger and Fiddle may be classed together, since each is conspicuous for his wit and his elegant language. Of the two Roger is the more fantastic in speech. He delights in long fanciful accounts of scenes and events. Thus he describes a feast to his mistress in such terms as to make her believe that he has been witnessing an awful massacre, and sustains the illusion for a considerable time.[3] His wit is particularly smart and ready, and is continually commended:

> *Dalavill.* I doe not think but this fellow in time may for his wit and understanding make Almanackes?
> *Clown.* Not so, sir, you being much more iudicious than I, Ile give you the preeminence in that, because I see by proofe you have such iudgment in times and seasons.
> *Dal.* And why in times and seasons?
> *Cl.* Because you have so seasonably made choise to come so iust at dinner-time.

Fiddle's wit is also much admired. One of the best examples is the way in which he wheedles money out of Berry:

> *Fid.* Have you any skill in Arithmeticke?
> *Ber.* Why dost thou aske?

[1] *Golden Age* (date unknown), *Brazen Age* (1595?), *Rape of Lucrece* (*c.* 1604).
[2] With them may be compared Robin in Wilkins's *Miseries of Enforced Marriage* (1607), Shorthose in *Wit without Money* (1614?), and others.
[3] *The English Traveller* (*c.* 1627), Heywood's *Works*, vol. iv, pp. 25–6.

> *Fid.* Sir, I would have you to multiply; could you not make this one shilling two or three? I would not be knowne to beg, but if you can doe this trick of multiplication I shall speeke the better. . . . So, sir, this is Multiplication, now, sir, if you know the Rule of addition you are an excellent Scholler: can you not adde?[1]

His language is very grandiloquent and eloquent, and his opinion of himself is decidedly high. After his disagreement with Bowdler he makes peace magnanimously and condescendingly, though the fault was entirely his own—'Why, then, anger avoid the roome, melancholy march away, choler to the next chamber, and here's my hand. I am yours to command from this time forth, your very mortall friend and loving enemy, master Fiddle.' And Bowdler, who, like everyone else, is fond of him, at once yields: 'Fiddle, give me thy hand, a plague on thee, thou knowest I love thee'.

Fiddle has little opportunity for the display of deeper and graver qualities, but traces of these appear in both Roger and Simkin. Roger's apparent grief at his mistress's sad end has already been mentioned[2]; and Simkin gives even clearer proof of his kindness of heart. Though at first his chief idea appears to be the prospective wedding-feast, as soon as his young master gets into trouble he is filled with pity which is evidently sincere, though extravagantly expressed, and at once promises his help.[3] He shows righteous indignation, too, at Old Harding's treatment of Philip, and the faithlessness of the latter's friends. The way in which he works upon the friends' greed to induce them to help his master is clever, and it is not his fault that his scheme fails.[4] At times too Simkin shows considerable wit, as when he replies to Philip's remark that:

> None but such a father
> Could so translate his children.

'Oh, Mr. Philip! I see your father is no scholar, but a meer dunce. I protest I never read a more vile translation.' He delights in puzzling his hearers by roundabout language, often quite unintelligible.[5] He is grandiloquent, too, in his speech, sometimes substituting a simpler word 'for the vulgar', in the style of Touchstone.

Clem, the Fair Maid's 'drawer', is again of a different type—coarser, more virile, and perhaps more typically English, and therefore in keeping with the play, which breathes the very spirit of Elizabethan England. He uses less ambitious language than the

[1] *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607), Heywood's *Works*, ii, p. 29.
[2] See above, p. 51.
[3] *Fortune by Land and Sea*, ii. 1.
[4] ii. 4.
[5] iii. 1.

other three clowns, and does not so often display the finer varieties of wit, but some of the jests in which he continually indulges, in season or out of season, are very good, as is his account of the different kinds of wine,[1] or his remark when the sailors wish to have their account scored up—'They took me for a simple gull, indeed, that would have had me to have taken chalk for cheese.' Moreover, his adventures while following his mistress's fortunes on land and sea give him wider opportunities for his wit than fall to the lot of the other clowns. Thus we have the benefit of his opinion of the Moors: 'I have observed the wisdom of these Moors: for some two days since, being invited to one of the chief bashaws to dinner, after meat, seated by a huge fire, and feeling his shins to burn, I requested him to pull back his chair, but he very understandingly sent for three or four masons, and removed the chimney.' His adventures also produce some amusing accounts of his misfortunes.[2] One at least of these is due to his love of gain, a fairly prominent feature of his character. Even when his mistress is captured by bandits his chief concern seems to be for his wages.[3] But on the whole he serves her faithfully and cheerfully enough, in adversity as well as in prosperity. His jovial, kindly clowning, sustained throughout the two long parts of the play, may be taken as typical of the 'honest English clown' at his best.

[1] *Fair Maid of the West* (before 1617), *Shakespeare Society*, 1850, p. 45.
[2] e. g. p. 59. [3] p. 141.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAME CONTINUED—SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS.

THE outline of the development of the stage fool given in the two preceding chapters is necessarily very incomplete, and can give no clear picture of the clown in general. As an attempt to supply these deficiencies, a summary will here be given of the principal characteristics of the fool both in the printed and in the acted play. Some of these qualities are common enough in themselves and by no means essentially comic, though they are converted into comic devices by the clowns. In the first place, the stage fool is almost invariably a lover of creature comforts, hating work, travel, and physical discomfort of every kind, and making a terrible fuss when any such trial falls to his lot. Particularly does he object to hunger and thirst, indeed, anxiety about food and drink is one of his earliest characteristics. It is suggested indirectly in the character of the earlier Vices and directly in that of the later ones; and it figures prominently in the rôle of Simplicity, the first pure clown, who on making Hospitality's acquaintance promptly invites himself to dinner, but scorns his plain fare, and after his murder refuses to mourn for him, because:

> He was an old churl, with never a good tooth in his head.
> . . . . . .
> He had nothing but beef, bread and cheese for me to eat.
> Now I would have had some pies, or bag-puddings with great lumps of fat.[1]

And this characteristic persists throughout the clown's history. We find Simkin gloating over the expected wedding-feast, of which he gives a fantastic description: 'This being the wedding-day of my master's eldest son, I expect rare cheer; as, first, the great spiced cake to go in, cake-bread fashion, drawn out with currants: the jealous furmety must put on his yellow hose again, and hot pies come mincing after: the boiled mutton must swim in a river of stewed broth, where the channel is made of prunes instead of pebbles, and prime raisins and currants in the stead of checker-stones and gravel;

[1] *Three Ladies of London*, Dodsley, vi, p. 318.

to omit geese and gulls, ducks and dotterels, widgeons and woodcocks, of which there will be plenty'. Sometimes food of some kind seems to be used as a comic property. In *King Darius* Iniquity says to Constancy:

> Nay, then I will give you no bread and butter.
> Here, take some—

and the Simpletons of the Drolls also appear munching huge slices of bread-and-butter. In connexion with the fool's love of comfort may be mentioned another point already noticed—his preference of urban to rustic life. This is notably the case with Shorthose,[1] who laments bitterly on hearing of his mistress's intention to leave town, and rejoices greatly when she changes her mind.

Fine clothes also have considerable attraction for the clown—a characteristic probably derived partly from the natural fools, who seem to have delighted in ornaments and bright colours. Thus Slipper, on receiving his reward from Bartram, promptly lays it out on finery,[2] which he never obtains, as he loses his money, so we do not see him flaunting as we see Clem[3] and Shadow.[4] And since one needs money for fine clothes and food and drink, the clown loves money too, and uses all his wits to obtain it. Fiddle's Feste-like mode of begging has already been quoted. Other fools use more questionable methods. The clown in *Sir Thomas Wyat* appropriates the price of Homes's betrayal of his master, and Piston rifles Ferdinand's dead body.[5] Food and drink the clown often steals outright, as Mouse steals the pot of ale.[6] And for gain or 'preferment', he is often content to be a time-server, as is the case with Lentulo, who readily deserts his old master for Penulo in the hope of a place at court.[7] This love of gain sometimes leads him into trouble. An early example of this occurs in *Appius and Virginia*, where Haphazard's anxiety to claim his reward brings about his undoing; and in the same way Clem's anxiety for 'honour' gets him into trouble at the court of Fez.

This brings us to another point—the clown is frequently duped. He loves to play practical jokes, as when Revenge sets the rustics at loggerheads,[8] and Taber gets money from his master on false

[1] Fletcher, *Wit without Money*, iii. 1.
[2] *James IV*, iv. 3. [3] *Fair Maid of the West*, Part I, Act v.
[4] Dekker, *Old Fortunatus* (*Works*, ed. Bullen, vol. i, p. 139).
[5] *Soliman and Perseda*, ii. 1.
[6] *Mucedorus*, Dodsley, vii, p. 234.
[7] *Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, Dodsley, vi, p. 182.
[8] Pickering, *Horestes*, ed. Collier in *Illustrations of Old English Literature*, vol. ii, pp. 5, 6.

pretences;[1] but on the other hand, he is quite as frequently the victim himself, either of sharper wits, as is Grim in *Damon and Pythias*, or of his own greed and folly, as is the case with Scumbroth, who mistakes the echoes of his own questions for answers, and acts upon them accordingly.[2]

Moreover, the fool is often a coward. He is ready enough to brag and threaten—the Vices are particularly conspicuous in this respect[3]—but he usually makes a poor show if anyone confronts him resolutely, even if it be only a woman. Strumbo's Falstaffian behaviour in battle has already been described. So in *The Blind Beggar of Bednall Green*, though Swash, when entrusted with his master's money, boasts mightily of his desire to meet a thief and prove his valour, as soon as the desired marauder appears he surrenders with ludicrous abjectness—'I pray you, do bind me hard, do, good Mr. Theef, harder yet, Sir.' When married, the clown is usually the humble slave of a shrewish wife, as is the case with Simplicity and Bullithrumble.

Another emotion which often exhibits the fool in a ridiculous light is that of love. Sometimes his passion is hopeless, as in the case of Trotter and Lentulo; at other times, when it is less ambitious, it is eminently successful, as is that of Cricket. But always it finds expression in a flood of absurdly extravagant exclamations. Some examples of these have already been given, but a quotation from Strumbo[4] may be added—'Oh wit, Oh pate, O memorie, O hand, O inke, O paper!' The love-affairs of two clowns are particularly noteworthy, in that they resemble Touchstone's wooing of Audrey. Frog's condescending address to Douce, ending—'as that

> Worthie Philosopher Hector ses, the words
> Of the wise do offend the foolish, so
> Douce, in few words and tedious talke
> Tell me when is the day'—

may have been inspired by the tone of Touchstone's courtship, since *The Fair Maid of Bristow* appeared some years later than *As You Like It*. The question of indebtedness is more doubtful in regard to *Nobody and Somebody*, for this play seems to have been acted about 1592 but revised about 1606. But that there was indebtedness on one side seems probable, for the way in which the clown carries off the girl from the country fellow to whom she was betrothed is decidedly

[1] Heywood, *Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, ii. 2.
[2] Dekker, *If this be not a Good Play, the Devil is in it.*
[3] e.g. Folly in *The World and the Child.* [4] *Locrine*, i. 3.

reminiscent of the manner in which Touchstone carries off Audrey from William.[1]

To come to those characteristics which belong more essentially to the clown. Of his horseplay and his more acrobatic tricks we know little, except from contemporary references, for naturally there are few records of these tricks in the printed versions of the plays. We can see, however, that there was a great deal of rough-and-tumble fighting, especially in the case of the Vices and the earlier regular clowns, who usually scatter blows very liberally around them. That this fighting was regarded as a regular source of diversion is clear from such stage-directions as the following (referring to Haphazard's fight with Marian)—'then one on the top of another make pastime'. Occasionally we have glimpses of other varieties of buffoonery. We can picture Inclination, bridled, prancing round the stage, neighing and throwing up his heels,[2] or Simplicity, blindfolded, charging at a post with his torch.[3] These traces become rarer in the later plays, though they still occur, as in *If you know not me, you know Nobody*, where the clown pulls away Beningfield's chair, remarking, 'God's pity, I think you are down'. But that there was a great deal of buffoonery which is not represented in the plays is clear from contemporary accounts, two of which have already been quoted—one concerning the Vice and the other concerning the clown. The 'scurvy faces' mentioned in the latter seem to have been particularly popular. Simon in *The Mayor of Queenborough* objects that the players' clown is 'too fair, i'faith, to make the people laugh . . . he will never look half scurvily enough'. A fuller account of the fool's tricks occurs in the Praeludium to Goffe's *Careless Shepherdess*:

> *Landlord.* . . . I'ave laughed
> Untill I cry'd again to see what Faces
> The Rogue will make: O it does me good
> To see him hold out's chin, hang down his hands,
> And twirle his Bauble. There is nere a part
> About him but breaks jests. I heard a fellow
> Once on this stage cry Doodle, Doodle, Dooe,
> Beyond compare.[4]

Similarly, of the clown's dancing but few traces remain in the plays, but contemporary references show that dances accompanied by the pipe and tabor were sometimes given between the acts, and also

[1] Simpson, *School of Shakespeare*, vol. i, p. 281.
[2] *Triall of Treasure*, Dodsley, iii, p. 279.
[3] *Three Lords and Three Ladies*, Dodsley, vi, p. 501.
[4] Cf. *Martin's Month's Mind* for account of the stage fool's tricks.

formed an important part of the concluding jig.[1] Kemp's famous morris-dance from London to Norwich proves him to have been an expert performer. In the extant plays, Slipper is the only clown who is represented as dancing with the definite purpose of giving entertainment (though one or two others take part in dances in the course of the play). In the introductory scene he and his brother the dwarf 'dance a gig devised for the nonst', and when his father again calls upon him he enters 'with a companion, boy or wench, dancing a hornpipe'.

But with regard to the songs which were so important an element in the clown's rôle, there is no such lack of evidence, for besides forming part of the inter-scenary and concluding entertainments, they were frequently interspersed in the plays themselves, and hence the record at least has survived. This is notably the case with Vices, very few of whom do not at least propose a song, even if it is not given. No other Elizabethan fool gives such an atmosphere of music to a play as Feste gives to *Twelfth Night*, but several of them are markedly musical. Simplicity, in particular, seems exceedingly fond of music, and is undoubtedly a good singer, for when he joins forces with the beggars he earns twice as much by his songs as they do. One specimen of his songs may be given:

> Simplicity sings it, and 'sperience doth prove,
> No biding in London for Conscience and Love.
> The country hath no peer,
> Where Conscience comes not once a year,
> And Love so welcome to every town,
> As wind that blows the houses down.
> Sing down adown, down, down, down.
> Simplicity sings it, and 'sperience doth prove,
> No dwelling in London, no biding in London, for Conscience and Love.

And though the only complete song which we hear from Pompey is unspeakably coarse, he too seems to be a lover of music, for he appeals to the 'merry lord' Valerius to give one of his songs for his special benefit.[2] Apart from the clowns who sing whole songs, there are many others who, like Lear's fool, frequently break into fragments of ballads, suggested by some remark or passing event, 'as fooles were wont', as a stage-direction to *The Longer thou Livest the more Fool thou art* informs us. Though the trick is nowhere so effectively used as in *Lear*, it is fairly common. Barnabe Bunch's scraps of ballads,[3] suggested by incidents which he witnesses, have already been

[1] See *Pauli Hentzerii Itinerarium Germaniæ, Angliæ, Italiæ, &c.*
[2] *Rape of Lucrece*, ii. 5.
[3] *Weakest goeth to the Wall*, Sc. ii.

mentioned; and Much[1] too breaks into song in the midst of his speech to the king—'Much is my father, and he is one of your tenants, in King's Mill at Wakefield, all on a green:

O there dwelleth a jolly pinder,
At Wakefield, all on a green!

But songs and dances are, as a rule, rather in the nature of interludes than integral parts of the play. What amusement, then, did the clown provide for the audience during the progress of the action? It must be remembered that the fool more than any other performer had his audience continually in view. Other actors might forget the spectators in their rôles, but the rôle of the clown was to remember them and keep them entertained. Often, especially in the case of the later Vices, we find direct appeals to particular members of the audience, Nichol Newfangle[2] being particularly remarkable in this respect. His appeals are many and bold—'How say you, little Meg?' or:

How say you, woman? You that stand in the angle,
Were you never acquainted with Nichol Newfangle?

Simplicity too, refers to various spectators, including a fellow 'that gapes to bite me, or else to eat that which I sing'; and the absence of such appeals from the parts of later clowns probably only implies that the more experienced actors could be trusted to supply them for themselves.

Among the clown's mirth-provoking devices, nonsense of all descriptions figures largely. Sometimes this is simply unmeaning rubbish, possibly an absurd question, such as that which Mischief addresses to Mercy:

I prey yow this question to claryfye:
Driffe-draff, mysse-masche,
Sume was corn, and sume was chaffe;
My dame seyde my name was Raffe;
Or-schett yower lokke, and take an halpenye.[3]

Sometimes this nonsense takes the form of a string of contradictions, such as Mouse's description of Mucedorus (given to Mucedorus himself)—'A was a little, low, broad, tall, narrow, big, well-favoured fellow'—much in the style of the fool of the Mummers' plays. A less crude variety is the extravagant expression of some emotion, doubtless a characteristic of the natural fool. Sufficient quotations from the clown's love-speeches have already been given; but he is fully

[1] *Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon.*
[2] *Like will to Like.*
[3] *Mankind*, ed. Furnivall and Pollard, *Macro Plays*, p. 3.

as ridiculous in sorrow as in love. Both Vices and clowns continually weep or threaten to do so, and the clowns in particular often indulge in extravagant laments. These are absurd even when sincere, as is Pipkin's lament for his mistress: O mistress! O Hugh! O Hugh! O mistress! Hugh, I must needs beat thee; I am mad! I am lunatic! I must fall upon thee: my mistress is dead! (*Beats Hugh*)'. And of the mock lament Simkin's is a fair sample: 'O my master! my master! what shall I do for my poor master? the kind churl is departed! never did poor hard-hearted wretch pass out of the world so like a lamb! alas! for my poor, usuring, extortioning master! many an old widow hast thou turned into the street, and many an orphan made beg their bread! Oh, my sweet, cruel, kind, pitiless, loving, hard-hearted master! he's dead; he's dead; he's gone; he's fled; and now full low must lie his head! Oh, my sweet, vile, kind, flinty, mild, uncharitable master!'[1] Other clowns tell absurd anecdotes, or give comic accounts of misadventures, as does Mouse of his encounter with the bear.

Nonsense of another kind is found in the mock prophecies often uttered by the clowns after the manner of Lear's fool. These are paralleled to some extent in the strings of impossible things which the fools of the folk-plays sometimes claim to have seen. Haphazard provides an early example of the prophecy:

When gain is no grandsire,
And gauds nought set by;
Nor puddings nor pie-meat
Poor knaves will come nigh,
Then hap and Haphazard
Shall have a new coat,
And so it may happen
To cut covetousness' throat.
Yea, then shall Judge Appius
Virginia obtain,
And geese shall crack mussels
Perhaps in the rain;
Larks shall be leverets,
And skip to and fro;
And churls shall be cods-heads,
Perhaps and also.'[2]

Some satire is often implied in these prophecies, as in *Lear*. Thus Frog vows fidelity to Douce until the time:

When tinkers leave to drinke good ale,
And souldiers of their weapons faile,

[1] Cf. Trombart's lament in *Locrine*.
[2] *Appius and Virginia*, Dodsley, iv, p. 130.

When pedlers go without there pack,
And water is more deare than sack,
When shoemakers drink that is small,
And lawiers have no tongues at all.[1]

A rather similar type of nonsense speech is a mock 'bill' or proclamation, an amusing example being Slipper's 'bill'—'If any gentleman, spirituall or temporall, will entertaine out of his service a young stripling of the age of thirty yeares, that can sleep with the soundest, eate with the hungriest, work with the sickest, lye with the lowdest, face with the proudest, &c., that can wait in a gentleman's chamber when his maister is a myle of, keepe his stable when tis emptie, and his purse when tis full, and hath many qualities worse than all these, let him write his name and goe his way, and attendance shall be given'. An example of the proclamation is found as early as the fifteenth century in Colle's ambiguous description of his master's powers.[2]

The subject of proclamations brings us to another point—the clown's delight in perversions and pretended misunderstandings. The perversion of a dictated address or a proclamation which he is ordered to 'cry', is a favourite device of the clown throughout his career. The later Vices provide several examples, the most quotable being Nichol Newfangle's perversion of the address dictated by Lucifer:[3]

Lucifer. All hail, O noble prince of hell!
N. N. All my dame's cows' tails fell down in the well.
L. I will exalt thee above the clouds.
N. N. I will salt thee, and hang thee in the shrouds.
L. Thou art the enhancer of my renown.
N. N. Thou art Hance, the hangman of Calais town.

And at the end of the clown's career this device still appears, as when Simkin is set by the pursuivant to make a proclamation offering a reward to anyone 'that can bring in these pirates' ships or heads', which he renders as 'that can bring in these pie-crusts or sheep's heads'.

Misunderstandings are a part of the common stock-in-trade of the clown. With the stupider type of clown these blunders are unintentional. Thus Much, when told by his master to 'make a cry', immediately begins to lament and roar, 'Help, help, help! I am undone, I am undone!' Much more common, however, are intentional blunders. To pretend to misunderstand a simple remark or order,

[1] *Fair Maid of Bristow.* [2] *Play of the Sacrament.* See above, p. 26.
[3] Cf. Sin in *All for Money* and Idleness in *Wit and Wisdom.*

or to play at cross-purposes with an interlocutor, is the clown's great delight. Cricket, when ordered to bring sack, inquires, 'Would you have a sack, sir?' and when Gripes replies angrily, 'Away, fool; a cup of sack to drink', explains, 'O, I had thought you would have had a sack to have put this law-cracking cog-foist in, instead of a pair of stocks'.[1] In Robin's sparring with Ilford and his companions, the device of quibbling and pretended misunderstanding is more subtly elaborated.[2] Misunderstandings of a cruder type are found in scenes between clowns and foreigners, such as Barnabe Bunch's conversation with Yacob the Fleming.[3]

Another type of blunder sometimes committed by the clown is a slip of the tongue. Here again there are both real and pretended blunders, but this time the first class predominates. Slips of the tongue appear first in the rôles of the stupider Vices such as Adulation,[4] who forget their parts, and even cleverer later Vices have occasional lapses. In the rôles of the regular clown neither type appears often. An example of the intentional slip is Simkin's reference to his master as a 'most tyrannical old fornicator—old master, I would say'. Somewhat akin to the pretended slip is the ambiguous remark that suggests an insult but can be interpreted harmlessly. Clem is an expert in this art.

Clem. You lie, sir.
Roughman. How! lie!
Clem. Yes, sir, at the Raven in the High Street, I was at your lodging this morning for a pottle pot.

It is impossible to classify comic devices according to the different types of fools, since the majority of them are common to all classes, but there is one set which belongs on the whole, though by no means invariably, rather to the subtler and more highly developed characters. These fools usually have a high opinion of their own importance and qualities. This characteristic is probably partly derived from the court fool, whose importance was generally acknowledged; and there is a suggestion of it, too, in the speeches of those Vices who boast of their prevalence and power. Thus Strumbo describes himself in his love-letter as 'a gentleman of good fame and name, maiesticall, in parell comely, in gate portlie', and so on; and Clem in the days of his prosperity at Fez goes so far as to adopt the royal 'we':

[1] *Wily Beguiled*, Dodsley, ix, p. 239.
[2] Wilkins, *Miseries of Enforced Marriage*, Act I.
[3] *The Weakest goeth to the Wall*, Sc. iv.
[4] *Respublica*, ed. Magnus, *E. E. T. S.*, p. 19.

Where be my Bashawes? usher us in state,
And when we sit to banquet see you waite.

Moreover, the fool often insists on his own wisdom, especially as contrasted with the folly of others—a very favourite joke. Sometimes the idea is evidently a delusion, as when Simplicity advises Fraud to 'take a wise fellow's counsel'. But other remarks are obviously intended in jest. Haunce laments, 'O what a pitifull case is this! What might I have done with this wit if my friends had bestowed learning upon me? Well, when all 's done, a naturall gift is worth all'; and Robin[1] brings out the contrast between himself and Ilford and his friends by retorting to the comment 'This is a philosophical fool', 'Then I, that am a fool by art, am better than you, that are fools by nature'. It is almost unnecessary to add that this idea is used constantly by Shakespeare's fools, who develop its possibilities to the utmost.

Robin also provides an example of another favourite trick—that of arguing and chopping logic, in the manner of Touchstone. When Ilford grows impatient with his replies, this dialogue ensues:

Ilford. What am I the better for thy answer?
Cl. What am I the better for thy question?
Ilf. Why, nothing.
Cl. Why, then, of nothing comes nothing.

Sir Sidney Lee has pointed out that Larivey's influence is probably largely responsible for the introduction of whimsical quibbling and chop-logic into the speech of the English clown, since it was from him that Lyly, probably the first to naturalize the fashion in England, seems to have derived it. Some of the clowns' disputations have more than a suspicion of parody of the schoolmen, and this quality is still more marked in their frequent mock-learned dissertations on various subjects. These, as has already been mentioned, undoubtedly owe much to the 'sermons joyeux', in which the Fool-Societies parodied both the offices of the Church and the rhetoric of the schools. It is the latter which is the more frequently travestied in the discourses of the fools. The most formal of these orations is the 'argument in the defence of drunkennes' pronounced by Bosse in *Every Woman in her Humour* (too long to quote) in which he proves that drunkenness is a virtue and that it 'ingenders with two of the morrall virtues, and six of the lyberall sciences'. But there are also a host of shorter speeches of the same nature, such as Pompey's account of ale:

[1] *Miseries of Enforced Marriage*, Act I.

Pomp. Is it not strange, my lord, that so many men love ale that know not what ale is?
Coll. Why, what is ale?
Pomp. Why, ale is a kind of juice made of the precious grain called malt; and what is malt? Malt's M A L T: and what is M A L T? M much, A ale, L little, T thrift: that is, much ale, little thrift.[1]

Sometimes these discourses take the form of ingenious comparisons, as when Slipper proves the resemblance between a woman and a horse.

Sententiousness of another kind appears in the moral speeches in which the fools not infrequently indulge. Cricket moralizes on money,[2] and Haunce on the untrustworthiness of mankind,[3] and Firestone on drunkards: 'How apt and ready is a drunkard now to reel to the devil!'[4] Here again one is reminded of that most sententious of fools, Touchstone.

In many of the speeches included under the above heads, another element appears—that of satire, which, as was shown in an earlier chapter, was also probably bequeathed to the stage clown by the Fool-Societies. In the Vice, as was natural, considering the moral purpose of the plays in which he appears, satire is particularly prominent—indeed, the Vice is perhaps most to be esteemed as a satirist. In their accounts of their travels, such characters as Folly in *The World and the Child* imply the prevalence of their particular vice in all classes of society, and Courage in *Tide tarrieth no Man* gives us a list of the occupants of his 'Barge of Sin', after the manner of the *Ship of Fools*. And again and again the Church receives a shrewd hit in the Moralities, sometimes in the very moral of the play, sometimes in an incidental remark, such as Infidelity's slap at the friars:

Lyke obstinate Friers I temper my looke,
Which had one eie on a wench, and another on a boke.[5]

Occasionally the Vice's satire is political, as in *King Darius*. Besides these deeper kinds of satire, there is a lighter and more purposeless variety, usually directed, according to immemorial custom, against women. Revenge, when dismissed from Horestes's service, announces his intention of betaking himself to women, since they are usually

[1] *Rape of Lucrece*, ii. 1.
[2] *Wily Beguiled*, Dodsley, ix, p. 244.
[3] *Wisdom of Dr. Dodypoll*, ed. Bullen, *Old English Plays*, vol. iii, p. 115.
[4] Middleton, *The Witch*, i. 2.
[5] Wager, *Repentance of Mary Magdalene*, ed. Carpenter, p. 21.

kind to him, being 'for the most part . . . borne malitious'. It is this lighter kind that is most popular with the regular clowns, except in plays like *Nobody and Somebody* which are in themselves satirical. The ancient gibes at women continually recur. Thus Ralph Simnell consents to have Elinor of Castile for his mistress if

> 'shee will never scold with Ned or fight with me.—Sirah Harry, I have put her downe with a thing impossible.
> *Henry*. What's that, Raphe?
> *Ralph*. Why, Harry, didst thou ever see that a woman could both hold her tongue and her hands?[1]

The most definite and elaborate social satire spoken by a clown in any play apart from Shakespeare's is Pompey's court, camp, city, and country 'news', which is much too long to quote.[2] But though in the plays themselves satire of the more bitter kind is usually absent, it undoubtedly formed a part of the clown's rôle. The jigs, judging from the little that we know of them, seem to have been largely topical and satirical. There is evidence to show that Kemp participated in the attack on 'Martin Marprelate', and that he and his fellow-clowns did much to embitter the Puritans and the civic authorities against the stage.[3] Tarlton's jig, *A Horse-load of Fools*, includes an unflattering portrait of a Puritan Goose-son (Gosson):

> Squeaking, gibbering, of everie degree;
> A most notorious pied balde foole.
> For sure a hippocrite;
> Of a verie numerous familie.

Attacks of this kind were doubtless partly responsible for the issuing in 1612 of an order suppressing all 'Jigges, Rymes and Daunces' at the end of plays.

Nothing has been said in these notes of the ordinary repartee which plays so prominent a part in the clown's rôle, since that point was sufficiently illustrated in the last chapter. The fool carried on this play of wits not only with the other characters, but often also, as we learn from contemporary references, with the spectators themselves. Sometimes these contests are carried on in rime, as when Will Summers matches his wit against Wolsey's:

> *Wols.* The bells hang high,
> And loud they cry.
> What do they speak?

[1] *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (*Representative Comedies*, i, p. 489).
[2] *Rape of Lucrece*, ii. 1.
[3] See E. N. S. Thompson, *The Controversy between the Puritans and the Stage*.

> *Will.* If you should die,
> There's none would cry,
> Though your neck should break.[1]

It appears, too, that the fool sometimes retorted in rime to the remarks of the spectators, and it is clear that the extemporizing of verses on subjects given by the audience was one form of the jig.

The subject of rime introduces another point—the language of the clown. This naturally varies considerably with different types of clown, but certain general characteristics may be pointed out. The medium is always prose or rime, whatever that of the principal part of the play may be. On the whole the Vices tend to speak in rime and the regular clowns in prose. No rule can be proved to have existed for the differentiation of the verse spoken by the Vice from that of the other characters in those plays which consist entirely of rough rime, though there are occasional traces of such differentiation. Puttenham referred to the use of rime 'both in the end and middle of a verse' as being 'commonly more commodiously uttered by these buffoons or vices in playes than by any other person', but this variety of metre does not occur often enough to be considered really characteristic of the Vice. Nash points out a more constant quality of the Vice's style when he characterizes it as being 'as right up and downe as may be',[2] for 'up and down' it undoubtedly is, as a general rule. It is true that the same may be said of other Morality characters of a very different type, but the Vice (especially, perhaps, the later Vice) appears to have a special predilection for verse of this kind. Haphazard exhibits this tendency in a marked degree. His prophecy, quoted above, is an unusually regular example; but the same principle governs all the verse of his part:

> Then charge you the father his daughter to bring;
> Then do you detain her, till proved be that thing:
> Which well you may win her, she present in house.
> It is but haphazard, a man or a mouse.

The serious characters in *Appius and Virginia* almost invariably use the popular 'fourteener' line.

In the earlier Moralities there are fewer traces of differentiation in metre. As a rule Vices and Virtues alike use short, rough rime. Perhaps the most characteristic tendency of these Vices is to break into stanzas, as does Hypocrisy:

[1] Rowley, *When you see me you know me.*
[2] *Strange News of intercepting certain Letters* (1592).

Methought by your face,
Ere you came in place,
It should be you:
Therefore I did abide
Here in this tide
For your coming, it is true.[1]

Short rime appears still in Moralities of a later date as a favourite metre with the Vice. On the whole, though by no means invariably, he tends to use short metre when talking to the audience or to his confederates, and longer, more imposing verse in conversation with his victims.

In style as in other respects Simplicity represents a transitional stage. In *The Three Ladies of London* he speaks in rime, but in the sequel, written six years later, his ordinary medium is prose, though he sometimes breaks into rime. These occasional snatches of verse are characteristic of the clown. He uses it frequently in his nonsense passages, especially love-raptures and laments. Specimens of the former have already been quoted,[2] and of the latter Trombart's lament over Strumbo may be taken as typical:

And is my master dead?
O sticks and stones, brickbats and bones, and is my master dead?
O you cockatrices and you bablatrices that in the woods dwell:
You briers and brambles, you cookes shoppes and shambles, come howle and yell.
With howling and screeking, with wailing and weeping, come you to lament,
O colliers of Croydon, and rusticks of Royden, and fishers of Kent.

Prophecies too are always in rime—usually in short couplets, as is Frog's address to Douce, already quoted, or that of Lear's fool. And in addition to these common uses of rime, and the riming contests and extemporized verses mentioned in the last section, fragments of verse are scattered promiscuously throughout the clowns' parts. Thus Strumbo after describing the burning of his house in his usual prose breaks into a kind of stanza:

And that which grieves me most,
My loving wife
(O cruel strife!)
The wicked flames did roast.
And therefore, Captain Crust,
We will continually cry
Except you seek a remedy,
Our houses to re-edify,
Which now are burnt to dust.

[1] *Lusty Iuventus.*

[2] Cf. Trotter and Cricket.

Much, on the other hand, once begins to speak in verse but reverts to prose, remarking 'I'll speak in prose, I miss this verse vilely'.

Some of the verses found in the plays are curious mixtures of English and Latin. The earliest specimens of these macaronic rimes in the drama occur in the Moralities. Infidelity recites or chants:

With heigh down down, and downe a down a,
Saluator mundi Domine, Kyri eleyson,
Ite, Missa est, With pipe up Alleluya.
Sed libera nos a malo, and so let us be at one.[1]

There are not many specimens in the later drama, but Miles the scholar speaks throughout a whole scene in such verse as the following:

And I with scientia and great diligentia,
Will conjure and charme, to keepe you from harme;
That utrum horum mavis, your very great navis,
Like Bartlet's ship, from Oxford do skip
With colleges and schooles, full loaden with fooles.
Quid dicis ad hoc, worshipfull Domine Dawcocke?

and the scene at Master Aminadab's school is a similar medley.[2] Mock declensions also seem popular. Scumbroth's rimed 'declension of a gallant' is unquotable, but Simplicity's prose declension may be given:

'O, singulariter nominativo, wise Lord Pleasure: genitivo, bind him to that post: dativo, give me my torch: accusativo, for I say he's a cosener: vocativo; O, give me room to run at him: ablativo, take and blind me. Pluraliter per omnes casus,
Laugh all you to see me, in my choler adust,
To burn and to broil that false Fraud to dust'.

For Latin tinges the clown's prose even more than his verse. There is hardly a Vice or fool of even the crudest and most stupid type who does not introduce at least one Latin quotation into his speeches—usually a misquotation in the case of the clown. Scraps of Church-Latin and law-Latin predominate—'Nominus patrus', 'habis corpus', and the like.

Another fairly constant characteristic of the clown's speech is his use of proverbial expressions—sometimes Latin proverbs in the case of more learned clowns or Vices, but more often popular sayings, gleaned from the common speech of the people. Among the Vices, Revenge is particularly noticeable for his use of such saws as 'Good slepinge in a hole skynne'. So, too, Clem the clown supports

[1] *Repentance of Mary Magdalene.* Cf. macaronic letter in *Mankind* (*Macro Plays*, p. 25).

[2] *How to choose a Good Wife from a Bad*, ii. 1.

a suggestion with the old proverb, 'What they want in meat let them take out in drink'.

But in spite of these common characteristics there are two distinct types of clown language—the rude but often vigorous vernacular and the grandiloquent style. It must be remembered, however, that clowns cannot be classified according to their speech, for many of them use both kinds impartially, suiting their language to their companions. In the first type proverbs are particularly common, and there is often an abundance of racy idiom. An early foreshadowing of this style is that of the minor Vices of *Mankind*, already noticed. Perversion of words or of whole sentences is frequent in the language of such clowns as Mouse, who refers to a hermit as 'an emmet',—though this occurs too as an absurd contrast to the grandiloquence or would-be grandiloquence of more imposing clowns, such as Slipper or Turnop. Rustic dialect appears at times, and in the case of Tavie in *Club Law* and Jockey in *Edward IV* much of the humour of the characters depends upon their very marked Welsh and Scotch accents. In the earlier plays language of this rougher type is often dull and commonplace enough, but when used by dramatists of greater skill and experience it becomes very effective, and well-adapted to the essentially native and popular character of the clown.

Much more ambitious is the other type of speech—a pompous, artificial style, delighting in imposing words and flowery phrases. This characteristic has already been noticed in regard to Fiddle, and many of his brother clowns show the same propensity to use the most elaborate expressions which they can devise. Thus Taber when about to fetch drink remarks, 'I will first acquaint your lips with the virtue of the cellar'. Connected with this delight in elaborate phrases is the clown's predilection for a roundabout, riddling manner of speech. Gnatto describes his mistress's playing on the lute as 'making wood speake and guts sing',[1] and Simkin announces his intention of cleaning out the hen-house in such enigmatical language that his interlocutor is quite unable to understand him.[2] Sometimes in the elegant speeches of the clown there is distinct imitation of Euphuism, already noticed with reference to Strumbo. Learned allusions (accurate or otherwise) are sometimes introduced, such as Strumbo's to Diana and Actaeon—'Ah, Strumbo, what hast thou seen, not Dina with the Asse Tom?'—and technical terms are also

[1] *A Knack to Know an Honest Man*, ll. 88-94 (Malone Society).
[2] *Fortune by Land and Sea*, ii. 1.

employed, usually absurdly, as in Scumbroth's astronomical jargon.[1] Occasionally the clown quotes from other plays, as does Clem from *Jeronimo*:

> When this eternal substance of my soul
> Did live imprisoned in this wanton flesh,
> I was a courtier in the court of Fez.

Another characteristic of the elegant style is the love of repetition. Sometimes a word is repeated with variations, as in the quotation from Turnop in the last chapter. More frequently a string of practically synonymous words is given, in the manner of Touchstone,[2] as in Frog's summoning of the guests:

> To make a step, to walke, or as it were to
> Come, or approach, to dinner.

Frog exemplifies another variety of repetition also reminiscent of Touchstone—repetition of the name of the person addressed—in his speech to Douce beginning:

> Why Douce, this day of wedlock, Douce,
> This day of going together, Douce.

The clown loves too to harp or jest on his own name if it is a suitable subject for jokes, as it very frequently is. Fiddle when called by his master retorts—'Here's a fidling indeed, I thinke your tongue be made of nothing but fiddle strings, I hope the fiddle must have some rest as well as the fiddle-sticke: well, Crowde; what say you to Fiddle now?' It may be noticed that here as often the clown speaks of himself in the third person. This repetition of his name the fool probably derived largely from such Vices as Haphazard, who harp continually on their names and their meanings.

From the Vice, too, the clown probably inherited another characteristic of his style, the frequent use of alliteration. The Vice employs this trick continually, particularly in his accounts of his travels, which are usually long lists of alliterating names. Such is Mery Report's beginning:

> At Louvain, at London and in Lombardy,
> At Baldock, at Barfold, and in Barbary.

Of the regular clowns the most noteworthy in this respect is the clown in *Love's Mistress*.[3] He sums up the merits of the poets in alliterative phrases, and gives an account of Cupid's qualities which is strongly reminiscent of Berowne's outburst on the same subject[4]—

[1] Dekker, *Works*, iii, pp. 311–12.
[2] Cf. *As You Like It*, v. 1.
[3] Heywood, *Works*, v.
[4] *Love's Labour's Lost*, iii. 1.

'I give you his stile in Folio: Hee is King of cares, cogitations, and coxcombes; Vice-roy of vowes and vanities; Prince of passions, prate-apaces, and pickled lovers; Duke of disasters, dissemblers, and drown'd eyes; Marquesse of melancholly, and mad-folkes; Grand Signior of griefes and grones; Lord of lamentations, Heroe of hie-hoes, Admirall of aymees and Mounsieur of mutton-lac'd'.

As an illustration of the remaining characteristics of the fool's style which can be noticed here, one quotation from Heywood will serve—Roger's soliloquy at the inn while young Geraldine is reading the letter which he has brought.[1] He begins—'This is Market-day, and heere acquaintance commonly meet; and whom have I encounter'd? My gossip Pint-pot, and brim full; nay, I mean to drinke with you before I part, and how doth all your worshipfull kindred? your sister Quart, your pater-Pottle (who was ever a Gentleman's fellow) and your old grandsier Gallon; they cannot chuse but be all in health, since so many healthes have been drunk out of them: I could wish them all heere, and in no worse state than I see you are in at this present'. Then Roger drinks to his 'gossip', and makes her pledge him in return, and concludes with 'one health to you and all your society in the Cellar, to Peter Pipe, Harry Hogshead, Bartholomew Butt, and little maister Randall Rundlet, to Timothy Taster, and all your other great and small friends'.

In the first place, this speech is a good example of the monologues which are so popular with the fool. Sometimes, as here, the object of these monologues is only to amuse; but sometimes, as was indicated in a former chapter, they are of dramatic value, in that they serve to inform the spectators of the progress of the action, or (notably in the case of the Vice, who habitually reveals his true character in his soliloquies) to put the audience at the right point of view. Often they are dull enough; but often too, especially when the clown gives them dramatic form by addressing some object or imaginary person, as do Roger and Miles, they reach the level of true comedy. Shakespeare's humorous monologues are unrivalled, but the materials of which they were composed may be found in those of his predecessors and contemporaries, and by no means invariably in crude or unworked form.

Roger's speech also shows a curious but common clown-trick—the habit of addressing or speaking of dumb or inanimate things as if they were human. The same characteristic appears to some extent in Simkin's description of the feast, quoted at the beginning of this chapter,

[1] *The English Traveller*, Heywood's *Works*, iv, p. 58.

and we find it again in Jenkin's account of finding the strange horses,[1] or Hodge's panegyric on the good-nature of the dust.[2]

It is hardly necessary to point out the resemblance between Roger's inquiries after 'gossip Pint-pot's' family and Bottom's inquiries after Pease-blossom's relatives; but one more point may be noticed in this connexion—the clown's love of giving nick-names, preferably alliterative, after the style of 'Peter Pipe' and 'Randall Rundlet' in this passage. This trick seems to have originated in the Vice's habit of hurling derisive and often abusive epithets at his opponents—'Peter Blowbowle', 'Tom Narrownose', 'Nicol-Noddy', and the like. Sometimes he extends these favours to the audience, as when Nichol Newfangle addresses a spectator as 'Wat Waghalter'.

This description of the characteristics of the stage fool would not be complete without some account of his dress; but to arrive at any definite conclusions on this point is no easy task. The nature of the Vice's dress is particularly doubtful. In many plays there is no mention of it, and references in other works are mostly too late to be of any service in regard to the earlier Vices. It is clear that the Vice cannot have constantly worn fool's dress. In order to deceive his victims he must have been disguised in part of the play at least, either as a virtue or as an ordinary gallant of the day. This disguising is often expressly mentioned.[3] But what did he wear when appearing in his own character? Galey states that he did not appear in regulation fool's dress until the last third of the sixteenth century; until that period he was attired as 'some typical fool of every-day life, some social crank'. But here must be mentioned once more Skelton's Vices, Fancy and Folly, of the nature of whose dress there can be no doubt—also Mery Report, whose 'light array' offends Jupiter. Mery Report, it is true, is not a Morality Vice, and Cacurgus and Hardy-Dardy, who also undoubtedly appeared as fools, are not Vices in the ordinary sense of the term. But it is clear that they are all related to the Vice of the Moralities, and their appearance in fool's dress (in the case of Mery Report, at an early date) is suggestive. The only other Morality Vice who certainly wore motley is Injury in *Albion Knight* (1565–6). Justice complains of his 'lyght apparail', and he retorts:

> Why should ye hym deeme of nature frayle
> Though as wyse as ye wolde were a Foxtayle
> Or a cote after the comen usage?

[1] *George-a-Greene* (*Ancient British Drama*, i, p. 447).
[2] Porter, *Two Angry Women of Abington* (*Representative Comedies*, i, p. 609).
[3] e.g. *Repentance of Mary Magdalene*.

Injury appears to scorn disguise; and the confusion in later references between Vices and fools supports the view that the later Vices appeared as a rule as fools. In *The Devil is an Ass*, Satan speaks of the time

> When every great man had his Vice stand by him
> In his long coat, shaking his wooden dagger.

That the Vice wore the long dress characteristic of the natural fools is suggested by other passages, notably Mirth's allusion in *The Staple of News* to 'the old way . . . when Iniquity came in like Hokos Pokos, in a jugler's jerkin with false skirts, like the knave of clubs'. Possibly, therefore, Collier is right in his conjecture that an entry in a list of 'Garments for Players', dating from 1516—'a long garment of peces and tyed with reband of blew satten, cutt'—refers to a sort of motley dress for the Vice, in which case Fancy and Folly were not the only Vices of their time to wear some kind of fool's costume.

No more information can be gleaned in regard to the Vice's dress as a whole, but there are a considerable number of allusions, especially in the case of later Vices, to articles of dress which we know from ancient sketches of professional fools (such as those collected by Gazeau [1] or the woodcuts in Barclay's *Ship of Fools*) to have often, if not always, formed part of their costume. Harsnett [2] refers to 'long Asses' ears', as being characteristic of the Vice, so he must frequently have worn a fool's cap. His dagger was one of his most important properties. The earliest certain reference to it occurs in *Impatient Poverty* (1560), but possibly one is implied in *Mankind*, nearly a century earlier. In *Mankind*, too, purses, frequently mentioned by later Vices and fools, figure prominently. Except in the case of Fancy and Cacurgus there is no definite mention of a bauble, but Nichol Newfangle brings in a 'knave of clubs', which, in view of the reference in *The Staple of News* quoted above, may perhaps be assumed to mean the figure of a fool. Perhaps too the 'flap for a flie' for which Sin begs a piece of the devil's tail [3] may be one variety of the flapper popular with the fool. The foxtail occasionally worn by Vices and clowns has already been noticed in connexion with the buffoon of the folk-plays. The spectacles worn by Inclination [4] likewise find parallels in the folk-drama—also in ancient prints of fools. These scraps of evidence go to prove that the costume of the Vice was at least partially influenced by that of the professional fool.

[1] *Les Bouffons.* [2] *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures.*

[3] *All for Money*, ed. Halliwell, *Literature of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries Illustrated*, p. 127.

[4] *Triall of Treasure*, Dodsley, iii, p. 269.

There is uncertainty again in regard to the dress of the various types of fool found in the regular drama. In the absence of evidence, it cannot be safely assumed that because a character is undoubtedly a court or domestic jester he wore the regulation motley, for it is clear that this was not always worn by the historical fools. Will Summers's portrait shows him in ordinary court dress; and though entries in contemporary account books mention fools' coats and hoods for him and other jesters, these are for masques or other revels, and the occurrence of these entries rather supports the view that these fools were not ordinarily dressed in motley. It appears, however, that it was most usual for the court or domestic fool of the drama to wear ordinary fool's dress. Chambers points out in regard to Shakespeare's practice in this respect that possibly this idea was derived 'less from contemporary custom, for indeed we hear of no fool at Elizabeth's court, than from the abundant fool literature, continental and English'. However this may be, Shakespeare's 'motley fools' certainly found counterparts in dress among their contemporaries. Babulo and the stage Will Summers undoubtedly wore motley, and there are indications in the plays that others did the same. We find too in Henslow's Diary an entry dating from 1602 referring to 'a sewtt of motley for the scotchman for the play called the malcolm kynge of scotes'.

The personages whose dress is most difficult to determine are the doubtful characters, particularly the earlier examples of the servant-clown. Thus Saunders in *The Taming of a Shrew*, definitely called the fool, wears 'a blew coat', and insists on the fact that he is wearing his master's 'livery coat', while on the other hand, Piston, in return for services rendered, is promised 'a guarded coat', which appears to mean a fool's coat.[1] All that can be said is that there is no rule for characters of this kind. But fortunately there is no lack of evidence as to the dress which became popular with the most common type of clown. Contemporary references and illustrations leave little doubt on the subject, particularly in regard to that most popular clown Tarlton, who may have introduced the fashion. We see him dressed in rustic style—a suit of russet, with enormous breeches, a 'buttoned cap' (the usual headgear of countrymen at that time), clumsy shoes, and a large pouch at his side.[2] It is clear

[1] Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Noble Gentleman*, v. 1:

> According to his merits he should wear
> A guarded coat, and a great wooden dagger.

[2] See frontispiece to *Tarlton's Jests*, *Tarlton's News out of Purgatory*, Chettle's *Kind-Hart's Dream*, *Cuck-Queanes and Cuckolds Errants*, and Wright's *Passions of the Mind*.

that this dress was characteristic of the most popular type of stage fool at that period—that is, at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the next. The picture of Miles strongly resembles that of Tarlton (possibly, of course, Tarlton played that rôle); and references to various parts of the dress are frequent, both in the plays and elsewhere. 'I swear by this button-cap', says Will Cricket, and Henslowe's Diary contains a reference to 'a payer of gyents hose' for Kemp. These enormous hose or 'slops' are particularly emphasized by contemporaries. Rowland remarks that 'Clownes knew the clowne by his great clownish slop'[1]; and a German description of the 'English clown' dating from 1597 runs as follows:

> Many a clownish trick he knows,
> Wears shoes that don't much pinch his toes.
> His breeches could hold two or more,
> And have a monstrous flap before.
> His jacket makes him look a fool
> With all the blows he takes so cool.[2]

Even fools of this type show traces of the influence of the ordinary fool's dress, similar to those mentioned in connexion with the Vice. The dagger appears still, though less frequently, and the pouch, or great purse, is very prominent. Cricket, too, mentions his 'fair bushtail'.

Two chief types, then, of fool's dress have been described, but no hard-and-fast rule for their use can be laid down—indeed, in the majority of cases, as with Heywood's clowns, there is not the slightest clue to the nature of the dress worn. In all probability, however, the costume of the ordinary type of clown at the period of his greatest popularity followed to some extent at least the fashion particularly associated with Tarlton, while the domestic fool proper tended to keep the traditional cap and bells.

[1] *Letting of Humours Blood in the Head Vaine*, Epigram 31.
[2] Quoted by Cohn, *Shakespeare in Germany*, p. lx.

CONCLUSION

We have now traced the evolution of the English stage fool from his beginnings to his fullest development. We have witnessed his gradual transformation from a crudely sketched personage, introduced almost at haphazard into a play to entertain the audience with the rudest and coarsest of buffoonery, to a character possessing true dramatic value, distinguished by individual characteristics and endowed in no mean degree with keen wit and genial humour. But the period that witnessed the highest development of the stage fool in general also saw the beginnings of his decay. This decay was not so much a deterioration in quality as a decrease in quantity. After the first decade of the seventeenth century the clown appears more and more rarely, and in the course of the next twenty years he becomes practically extinct. The cause of this gradual but complete disappearance is not easy to determine. The most usual explanation has already been hinted at—the decay of the court and domestic fools. But it seems unlikely that this was the only cause, though it may have been in some degree responsible, for the domestic fool lingered on until the eighteenth century, and even the court fool did not finally disappear until the fall of Charles I, when the stage fool had long been doomed. Another suggestion which seems still less feasible is that advanced by Drake[1]—that the pre-eminence of Shakespeare's fools led to the extinction of the character, since it was impossible to keep up the standard which they had created.

It seems most probable that the decay of the stage fool was largely the result of a gradual decrease in the demand for him, consequent on a change which came over the drama in general in the early days of the Stuarts. By that time the national interest in the drama which had been so characteristic of Elizabeth's reign had weakened, and the stage was becoming increasingly dependent on court favour. Early in James I's reign all the London companies came to be directly under royal patronage, and the production of their plays was subjected to the control of the Master of the Revels; consequently the younger dramatists came more and more under the influence of the court—of a court, moreover, that was becoming increasingly superficial and

[1] *Shakespeare and His Times.*

frivolous. With the ensuing corruption of the drama in general there is no need to deal here—the important point for the clown is the fact that from this time the drama began to lose its national character, and to become a more artificial and courtly literary form. In such a drama there was no place for the clown, who was, as we have seen, an essentially native and popular character, best suited to a society not yet too sophisticated or too highly developed. For the fool himself has a good deal of the child, of the undeveloped creature, in his nature. Frankness, that most striking characteristic of the primitive being, is continually noticeable in him—in his criticisms of others and of society in general, in the expression of his passions, notably his greed, and in his too frequent coarseness. Thus he was well suited to the Elizabethan age, which was not, on the whole, highly sophisticated; but was out of place in the more artificial state of society which came in with the Stuarts and was speedily reflected in the drama. The court gallants who then became the chief patrons of the stage demanded, not the sallies of the clown, but a constant flow of smart dialogue, enlivened by flashes of sparkling but often superficial wit. Cartwright extols the superiority of this new style to the old in an address to Fletcher:

> Shakespeare to thee was dull, whose best wit lies
> I' the ladies' questions and the fools' replies,
> Old-fashioned wit, which walk'd from town to town
> In trunk-hose, which our fathers call'd the clown.

A generation which could speak thus of Shakespeare's fools could have little use for those of his successors.

Fletcher and his collaborator Beaumont were among the first to cater for the new taste in drama. In their joint works but one fool appears, and that a poor one. And from their time onward the stage clown was doomed. As has already been pointed out, he was largely replaced by the jesting, intriguing servant, not unlike the Italian type. Naturally this change was gradual, for the older dramatists, such as Heywood, still clung to old-fashioned ways; but by the time of the closing of the play-houses the once beloved clown was banished from the regular drama for ever. It is true that during the period of the prohibition of plays, the 'drolls' by means of which lovers of the drama managed to satisfy their desires in spite of the act, perpetuated some of the buffooneries of the ancient fools; but these were only a stop-gap. After the Restoration, when a yet more artificial society prevailed than in pre-Commonwealth days, we find but one isolated attempt to revive the clown—Lobster in *Thorny-Abbey*. A significant scene occurs in Shadwell's play, *The Woman Captain* (1680). At

the opening of the play, when young Scattergood is dismissing the old servants of his father, a domestic fool appears, and pleads to be allowed to stay; but in spite of his protests he is sent packing with the rest, because 'tis out of fashion for great men to keep fools . . . 'tis exploded even upon the stage'.

Hence we may say that the English stage fool rose and fell with the Elizabethan drama, as befitted such a true child of his age. He had served his turn, and had become superseded by a new order of things. It is difficult for the modern reader to understand the strength of the fascination which he exerted in his day. His coarsenesses revolt us, and his rude jokes often fail to amuse. But coarse as the clowns frequently are, they compare favourably as regards morality with the characters which succeeded them on the stage; and on the other hand, as we have seen, they are by no means destitute of enduring merit. Some of their sallies and shrewd hits retain their freshness and force to-day, and among these merry-makers of a bygone age there are not a few whose acquaintance we make with pleasure, and whom we remember with affection. Without Babulo and Turnop and the clowns of Greene and Heywood the drama would be the poorer. And if this were not the case, if we sought in vain in the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries for a fool of any considerable intrinsic merit, we should still be obliged to regard the Elizabethan clown with some measure of gratitude and respect, since it is to the tradition embodied in him that we owe the fools of Shakespeare.